




Wife OR Spinster

STORIES BY NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN

INTRODUCTION BY DEBORAH PICKMAN CLIFFORD, BIOGRAPHER OF JULIA WARD HOWE

EDITED BY JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON, ISABELLE D. WAUGH & CHARLES G. WAUGH



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DEBORAH PICKMAN CLIFFORD

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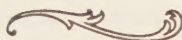
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Introduction



WIFE OR SPINSTER OPENS A window onto the past more tantalizing than many history books. These 18 stories written between 1840 and 1900 carry the reader into a very different world from our own, and yet they speak to concerns that are still with us. In this age of co-ed dorms and affirmative action workplace, it is hard to imagine how separated the sexes were a hundred years ago. It is equally hard to understand how limited a woman was in her choice of career. Today she can try her hand at almost anything, from law or politics to joining the army or driving a truck. Back then, with a few notable exceptions, most women stayed home and only those who had to worked outside the home.

"A wife's alot cheaper than hired help," quips the old Yankee pundit in "Mrs. Flint's Married Experience." This bleak view of marriage for women is a recurring theme in these stories, many of which are set in early New England. Before the Revolution a woman in the American colonies had almost no say in her choice of a mate and once married she was expected to obey him. Her husband, as head of the family, controlled the finances and made all the important decisions. When he died his widow was fortunate if she received more than a third of his estate. Colonial statutes gave women little protection and ultimately their fate was more dependent on luck than the law.

After the Revolution, however, all this began to change as a new companionate ideal of marriage emerged. Gradually, over the course of the nineteenth century, the image of the domineering husband and his servile wife was replaced by a view of marriage in which greater attention was paid to sympathy, affection, and mutual obligation. At the same time, however, men and women were beginning to lead increasingly separate lives. This was particularly true in the cities of the Northeast. There husbands went out to work each morning in factories or other places of business, moving for most of their waking hours in a

man's world. Meanwhile, their wives, if they could afford to, stayed home to care for the house and children, both demanding tasks in an era of large families and few household conveniences.

If nineteenth century women enjoyed far greater power in the home than their colonial grandmothers had, men still held sway in the world outside. With the exception of Ruth Herrick, the ace newspaper reporter in Elizabeth Jordan's story, there is little mention of professional women in this collection. But while public careers get little boost here, women are nonetheless encouraged to think and act for themselves. Aunt Jane, the elderly narrator in "Sally Ann's Experience," declares that submissive wives get what they ask for. "I've noticed," she says "that whenever a woman's willin' to be imposed upon, there's always a man standin' around ready to do the imposin'."

In these stories we move largely in a domestic woman's world, far from the public hustle and bustle of commerce and industry, of law and politics. This world has its own rules and standards and the women in it exhibit a good deal of contempt for the man-made legal system which often fails to protect them or their sisters. Over and over again these fictional heroines have recourse to their own ideas of justice. In "Ruth Herrick's Assignment" for example, the woman reporter loses her chance for a 'big scoop' by refusing to publish incriminating evidence against a wife who had been unduly provoked into killing her husband. In Edith Wharton's story, "Mrs. Manstey's View," a powerless old woman finds her own extra-legal way to delay the erection of a tall building threatening to block the view from her boarding house window. Finally, in "Sally Ann's Experience," the courageous heroine defies womanly propriety by getting up in church and denouncing the tyrannous behavior of the male members of the congregation.

For all the attention paid to masculine injustice and the legal powerlessness of women, the heroines of this nineteenth century fiction often take the law into their own hands rather than seek to rewrite public statutes. "I never went to no law book to find out what my rights was," says the elderly narrator of one tale; "when I wanted anything I went and got it." The public drive for women's rights, well underway by the eighteen-fifties was not touching the everyday lives of most women.

Yet these stories make it very clear how hard it was for women to make it on their own. In colonial times, when men outnumbered women, spinsters were few and generally scorned. But by the early nineteenth century the balance between the sexes in the eastern states had shifted, as young men headed west to seek their fortunes. They left behind sisters of marriageable age, but not enough prospective husbands

to go around. Meanwhile young women, particularly those from the middle and upper classes, had begun to question whether marriage and motherhood were their only options. Surely it was better to remain single than be miserably tied to a tyrannical husband. Economic factors, however, prevented most women from actively choosing a single status.

Most spinsters, like the ones in this collection of stories, made the best of difficult circumstances. Some like Betsey Lane, Sarah Orne Jewett's heroine, ended their days on their town's poor farm. Others lived with relatives, went into service, or took in boarders. Later in the nineteenth century, as it became easier for women to earn their own living, increasing numbers of them chose not to marry. Louisa May Alcott, for example, revelled in her spinsterhood, claiming that liberty was "a better husband." But Alcott had the good fortune to become a successful author, one of the few professions considered suitable for women in the last century. With the income from her writing, she not only supported herself but her whole family. Lydia Maria Child, the author of the earliest story in this collection and the only one about slavery, was one of the very first American women to make her living by her pen.

Religion is a more common theme here than in most contemporary fiction. For many of the women in these stories it is a source of comfort. For others it is a source of power. Religion traditionally had been one of the few permissible activities for women outside the domestic sphere. In the nineteenth century, as mothers assumed primary responsibility for the upbringing of their children, they also acquired a moral authority over their families which extended into the community. Female piety and activism were welcomed by the Protestant clergy and the early decades of the nineteenth century saw an upswelling of revivalism in which women played a prominent part. Some of the women in these stories, however, can hardly be called orthodox Christians. Esther Gay, the heroine of "An Independent Thinker," is a scandal in her community because she knits on Sundays instead of going to church. We soon learn, however, that Esther is a better Christian than many of her neighbors. Anna Malaan, another independent thinker is convinced that dogs are as worthy of Christ's love as people. She even attributes to animals theological creeds of their own.

Historians are often justifiably hesitant to see fiction as an authoritative record of the past. Yet it is clear from reading *Wife or Spinster* that the authors of these stories were careful observers and recorders of their world. We share the pleasures of the nineteenth century woman but we are also led into the kitchens of harried New England house-

INTRODUCTION

wives, into the textile mills where so many nineteenth century women labored, and onto the plantations where women slaves were deprived of every human dignity. We share the frustration of women denied the use of their creative powers. But we also see the joy experienced by those women who found ways to overcome the restrictions binding them. For every heroine crushed by a domineering mother, father, or husband, there is another whom even the most adverse circumstances cannot confound.

DEBORAH PICKMAN CLIFFORD

A Marriage of Persuasion



SUSAN PETTIGRU KING BOWEN



AND SO YOU REFUSED HIM?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Without one word of hope?"

"Not one."

"Harshly? rudely?"

"I trust not. Finally and positively, I certainly did."

"Anna! I can't forgive you."

"My dear mamma, what have I done?"

"What have you done? Refused an excellent man; one whom any mother would be proud to see as her daughter's husband. Sent from the house the best friend I have—deprived us of our mainstay and support—insulted him—and—destroyed the great hope of my life!" The tears streamed from Mrs. Mansfield's eyes. She drew away her hand from her daughter's clasp, and tried to leave the room. Anna detained her.

"Dearest mother! You cannot be more grieved than I am. Mr. Gordon is a very worthy man—he has been a kind friend to us in adversity—he is, I believe, truly sincere in his love for me, and I regret very deeply that it should have brought us to this pass. I have not wounded him further than I could help, I assure you. He will return to visit us in his usual way, after a while; indeed, I hope to see so little

change in our intercourse, that I would have spared you the annoyance of knowing this, had he not expressly desired that I should tell you."

"Ah, he is a forgiving and generous creature; a true Christian. Such a man as that to be so treated!"

Anna was silent.

"Anna," resumed her mother, with sudden energy, after a moment's pause, "do you love any one else? Have you formed some absurd attachment which interferes with Mr. Gordon's undeniable claim to your affections?"

Miss Mansfield's noble and expressive face was calmly lifted to her mother's heated and excited gaze.

"No, mamma," she simply answered.

"Then, *why* can't you marry Mr. Gordon, and make me happy?"

"Because," and Anna's voice was firm, decided, and honest. "Because I do not love him, and to marry him would make me very unhappy."

"Selfish as ever!" ejaculated Mrs. Mansfield. "Will you tell me what you dislike in him?" she pursued.

"I did not say I disliked Mr. Gordon, mamma."

"What you don't like, then? Why you don't love him?"

Anna smiled faintly. "Dear mamma! Is there not a great difference between liking and being in love?"

"You are trifling with me most disrespectfully. Is it not enough that I should suffer this disappointment at your hands, and can you not spare me this beating about the bush? I wish a plain answer to a plain question. Is there anything about Mr. Gordon especially disagreeable to you? If so, what is it?"

"Nothing especially disagreeable, as a friend—as a man whom one sees three or four times a week; but as a husband, several things."

"May I, as only your mother—of course a very insignificant creature to wish or have your confidence—ask these several things?"

"In the first place, then, his appearance is not attractive to me."

"Gracious heaven!" cried Mrs. Mansfield, starting up. "Do I live to hear my daughter express such a sentiment! His appearance! Do you not know that to think of such an objection is—the—the—very reverse of modest? Where have you got such ideas? To a truly virtuous woman, what are a man's looks? I might expect such an objection from a girl of low mind and vicious ideas, but not from Anna Mansfield. So this is your reason for not marrying an excellent, kind"—

"Not my only one, mamma," Anna interrupted gently, "it is one of them, but not the greatest. I named it first because it is, I think, very important; and I cannot see the impropriety which strikes you." A

slight blush rose to her cheek, as she continued, "I should not like to engage myself to pass my life with a man whose attentions would be repulsive to me, if he had the right to take my hand—or—excuse me, mamma, I don't like to say any more on this point." And then as the color deepened, she added in a lower voice, "You saw Frederick yesterday put his arm around Maria's waist, as he lifted her from the saddle; and, not caring for the presence of you, his aunt, and us, his cousins, he—a bridegroom of three months—he kissed her pretty blooming cheek, and drew her close to him. She blushed, and said, 'don't, Fred,' but evidently was not displeased. Now, could I endure?—Oh, mamma, pray don't talk about it. It makes me ill. I have named one of the smallest, and at the same time one of the greatest objections. Why dwell upon a difference of opinion, in many essential cases—a total want of congeniality—sympathy—taste, when this trivial reason (provided he possessed the others) is in itself so strong? Dear mamma, don't be angry—don't be disappointed. You would not wish to make me truly miserable? Perhaps in a year or two, Sally may be Mr. Gordon's choice; and Sally may take him as her beau ideal. Why do you want to get rid of me so soon?"

"Ah, my dear," said Mrs. Mansfield, "you know how poor we are now. Here I am with you four girls, and an income not much larger than in your dear father's time I spent upon my own dress. Is it wonderful that I long to see you settled? Heaven knows that I am not one of those mercenary mothers who would give their children to any man with money. No, indeed. I would not be so wicked. But when a gentleman like Norman Gordon—an honorable, trustworthy, generous creature—wishes to become my son, do you wonder that I should desire it too? I knew his father before him—I knew his mother—all good people; it is good blood, my child—the best dependence in the world. You are nearly twenty years old, and there are three younger than you; how can I help being anxious? And I who know what 'love-matches' are—how many a girl goes to her ruin by that foolish idea; marrying some boy in haste, and repenting at leisure—children—no money—bills to pay—oh! my dear Anna, where is the love then?"

"Mamma, am I making or thinking of making any such match?"

"But you may do it. I want to save you from this. I have a horror of these romantic 'love-matches.'"

"Did you not love my father, mamma?" Anna asked, in a low voice.

"Of course I did. All women should love their husbands. All proper, well-regulated women do love their husbands."

"And yet you wish me to marry without love!"

"Love comes after marriage—every woman with good principles loves her husband. She makes the best of her bargain. Life is a lottery, and if you draw a prize or a blank, you must accept it as it is and be satisfied. Then, when a woman has sworn, in the face of God and man, 'to love, honor, and obey' her husband, how can she reconcile herself to not doing it?"

"But, if she should not? if she finds it impossible? Oh, think of that, mamma. Think of vowing solemnly in the face of heaven—and breaking one's oath! Swearing to love, where you feel indifference—promising to honor, where you see little to respect—and vowing to obey, where your reason tells you there is no judgment to make obedience possible! Taking upon your shoulders, *for life*, a burden you cannot bear, and which it is a crime to struggle under, or to cast aside!"

"You know nothing about it, Anna," Mrs. Mansfield said impatiently. "It is not proper for a young girl to think and speak in this wild way. Your mother is here to guide and direct you. No good ever comes of a child arguing and setting herself up in this manner, to teach those older and wiser than herself. The Bible says, 'Honor thy father and thy mother'—it don't say, 'dispute with them.' I tell you what I heard from *my* mother, and what every right-minded person knows. 'Make a good choice in life; marry, and love will come afterward.' Love comes with the—never mind. I will not say any more now. I hope sincerely you have been careful of poor Norman's feelings. But you are not apt to do that. You have lacerated mine enough, Heaven knows."

"Oh, mamma! when—how?"

"In this business. When it would be so easy for you to make us all happy, and you prefer your own notions, and willfully act up to them."

A flush of transient anger and indignation swept gustily over Miss Mansfield's face; but she conquered the emotion, and playfully taking a volume from a book stand near, said, with perfect good humor, and meaningfully, "May I read 'Clarissa Harlowe,' mamma?"

"No, put it down, Anna, and don't bother me with any further nonsense."

The daughter obediently withdrew, glad to escape so painful and so disagreeable an interview.

But although this was the first, it was by no means the last of such conversations. Every day the subject was renewed, but gradually Mrs. Mansfield changed her tactics. She no longer scolded or insisted; her reproaches were silent looks of misery—pathetic appeals to heaven "to grant her patience under her afflictions." She was very affectionate to her daughter—heartrendingly so. Anna was called upon constantly to notice what a tender parent she was distressing. Each necessary

privation in their reduced household (the father's honorable failure and death had brought them from affluence to comparative poverty) was prologued and epilogued by sighs and suggestions. "If only Anna could"—and then a sudden pause and deep respiration.

"My own dear child," Mrs. Mansfield would sometimes say, "how I wish you had a new dress. That brown silk is very shabby; but we cannot, with our limited means, buy another, and yet I saw Jane Berryman sneering at it, with her flounced skirts spreading a mile behind her."

"Indeed, mamma, I don't care for Jane Berryman's sneers. It is very good of you to be anxious about it, but *I* think the old brown very becoming."

The next day a rich plaid silk, glossy and fresh, lay upon Anna's bed. "I could not stand it, my dear," said Mrs. Mansfield. "I must do without a new cloak this winter. A mother would rather starve with cold than see her daughter less handsomely dressed than she ought to be. Nothing is a sacrifice to *me*, for *you*, Anna."

In vain poor Anna protested and tried to return the silk, and exchange it for the very necessary cloak, whose purchase was now impossible. Mrs. Mansfield positively forbade her, and the thin black shawl which covered the widow's last year's bombazine was worn with a prolonged shiver, whenever Anna was near enough to hear and see.

Mr. Gordon soon returned to pay his usual visits—to offer his usual attentions—to make his usual presents, at stated times, of things which could permissibly be tendered. The visits Mrs. Mansfield received with great delight—the attentions were allowed; but the first basket of winter produce which arrived from Mr. Gordon's farm, she requested decidedly should be the last.

Clara, the youngest girl, a child of seven, cried lustily because her mamma said, "These will be the last potatoes we shall ever eat." From the solemnity of the tone, the little thing fancied that potatoes—a very important item in her daily consumption—were tabooed forever. She desisted when she found that it was only the potatoes from the Gordon farm that fell under the restriction.

Day by day, week after week, this persecution continued. It was the unceasing drop of water that "stayed not itself" for a single instant. In despair, Anna went to consult an aunt, whose opinion she highly valued—whose principles were undoubted—an exemplary wife and mother, and a kind friend always to her niece. Anna recited her woes. "What must I do to escape this torment, my dear Aunt Mary? I feel and know my duty to mamma, I trust; but this life is wearing me out."

Aunt Mary smiled.

"And you don't like Mr. Gordon, dear?"

"I now detest him."

"Oh, for shame! How can you say so? Indeed, my child, I cannot but agree with your mother. This is an excellent match; and it seems to me that if you have no positive objection against his character and standing, you ought to reconsider Mr. Gordon's proposal."

"But, don't you understand that I don't in the least care for the man, except as an ordinary acquaintance. He is well enough as he is; but, do you too advocate a marriage made on such a foundation?"

"Anna! A love-match makes no marriage of love."

"*Violà une chanson dont je connais l'air!*" said Anna, smiling bitterly in her turn. "You will all force me to marry this man, actually to get rid of him."

"Well, you could not do a better thing, I think?"

Anna returned home disconsolately; returned to the same wearying, petty, incessant pin pricks, unencouraged by a single word. With all her affection for her mother, she could not but see her weakness in most cases; but on her aunt's judgment she relied, and what had been the result of the interview?—a decided approval of Mrs. Mansfield's wishes.

Let those who blame Anna Mansfield for her next step pray to be kept from the same pitfall. This is a mere sketch, but an outline to which all who choose may fill up the hints given. Those who believe that *they* would have been steadfast to the end will have my admiration, if, when their day of trial comes, they hold firmly to the right; but—as we look around, have we not cause to think that there are many Mrs. Mansfields, and, alas! many Annas?

There came an evening, at length, when on Miss Mansfield's finger shone a great diamond, which dazzled tiny Clara's eyes and made her uncognizant of the tears in her sister's, as she asked wonderingly, "Where did you get such a beau-ti-ful ring?"

Mrs. Mansfield triumphantly said, "That is a secret, Clara."

"No secret for you, my little darling," Anna answered very low and gravely. "Mr. Gordon gave it to me as a pledge that I am to marry him."

"Do you love him, Annie?" Clara said, swallowing her surprise, with great, open, childish eyes.

"Don't ask foolish questions, Clara," her mother cried angrily. But the tears now rolled down the elder sister's white cheek, and she held the little girl close to her bosom, as she whispered, "You shall come and live with me, my own, and when you marry, I will not need, if God helps me, to ask *you* that question."

The day came—hurried on—and Anna Mansfield was Mrs. Norman Gordon. She was the owner of houses and lands—gold and silver—a perjured conscience and a bleeding heart. Very fine possessions were they, truly, and very proud Mrs. Mansfield was and is, of the hand she had in this righteous barter.

I see Mrs. Gordon frequently; she is very pale and cold, and kind. She has no children—Clara does live with her. Mr. Gordon is not happy, evidently; he has nothing to complain of in his wife. She is scrupulously polite to him, but there is not an atom of sympathy between them. He is prejudiced, uncultivated, and now that he has her, is terribly afraid of being ruled by her. It is a joyless household, and a very rich one. I watch Mrs. Mansfield's greedy gaze lighten broader and broader as the blaze of plate—the measured footfall of a train of servants—the luxurious profusion of their constant service, are spread out before her. She treads the “velvet pile” of carpets with a happy step, and adores her daughter's noble brow, when she sees shimmering upon it—reflecting a thousand lights—the mass of brilliants that binds, in its costly clasp, the struggling thoughts of what was once Anna Mansfield.

So we leave them. What of the end of all this? Is this grand automaton really dead, or does a heart, young and still untouched, lurk—strong, free, and dangerous—in that quiet, unmoved, and stately figure?

The Storm



KATE CHOPIN

I



THE LEAVES WERE SO STILL that even Bibi thought it was going to rain. Bobinôt, who was accustomed to converse on terms of perfect equality with his little son, called the child's attention to certain sombre clouds that were rolling with sinister intention from the west, accompanied by a sullen, threatening roar. They were at Friedheimer's store and decided to remain there till the storm had passed. They sat within the door on two empty kegs. Bibi was four years old and looked very wise.

"Mama'll be 'fraid, yes," he suggested with blinking eyes.

"She'll shut the house. Maybe she got Sylvie helpin' her this evenin'," Bobinôt responded reassuringly.

"No; she ent got Sylvie. Sylvie was helpin' her yistiday," piped Bibi.

Bobinôt arose and going across to the counter purchased a can of shrimps, of which Calixta was very fond. Then he returned to his perch on the keg and sat stolidly holding the can of shrimps while the storm burst. It shook the wooden store and seemed to be ripping great furrows in the distant field. Bibi laid his little hand on his father's knee and was not afraid.

II

Calixta, at home, felt no uneasiness for their safety. She sat at a side window sewing furiously on a sewing machine. She was greatly occupied and did not notice the approaching storm. But she felt very warm and often stopped to mop her face on which the perspiration gathered in beads. She unfastened her white sacque at the throat. It began to grow dark, and suddenly realizing the situation she got up hurriedly and went about closing windows and doors.

Out on the small front gallery she had hung Bobinôt's Sunday clothes to air, and she hastened out to gather them before the rain fell. As she stepped outside, Alcée Laballière rode in at the gate. She had not seen him very often since her marriage, and never alone. She stood there with Bobinôt's coat in her hands, and the big raindrops began to fall. Alcée rode his horse under the shelter of a side projection where the chickens had huddled, and there were plows and a harrow piled up in the corner.

"May I come and wait on your gallery till the storm is over, Calixta?" he asked.

"Come 'long in, M'sieur Alcée."

His voice and her own startled her as if from a trance, and she seized Bobinôt's vest. Alcée, mounting to the porch, grabbed the trousers and snatched Bibi's braided jacket that was about to be carried away by a sudden gust of wind. He expressed an intention to remain outside, but it was soon apparent that he might as well have been out in the open: the water beat in upon the boards in driving sheets, and he went inside, closing the door after him. It was even necessary to put something beneath the door to keep the water out.

"My! what a rain! It's good two years sence it rain' like that," exclaimed Calixta as she rolled up a piece of bagging and Alcée helped her to thrust it beneath the crack.

She was a little fuller of figure than five years before when she married; but she had lost nothing of her vivacity. Her blue eyes still retained their melting quality; and her yellow hair, disheveled by the wind and rain, kinked more stubbornly than ever about her ears and temples.

The rain beat upon the low, shingled roof with a force and clatter that threatened to break an entrance and deluge them there. They were in the dining room—the sitting room—the general utility room. Adjoining was her bedroom, with Bibi's couch alongside her own. The door stood open, and the room with its white, monumental bed, its closed shutters, looked dim and mysterious.

Alcée flung himself into a rocker, and Calixta nervously began to gather up from the floor the lengths of a cotton sheet which she had been sewing.

"If this keeps up, *Dieu sait* if the levees goin' to stan' it!" she exclaimed.

"What have you got to do with the levees?"

"I got enough to do! An' there's Bobinôt with Bibi out in that storm—if he only didn' left Friedheimer's!"

"Let us hope, Calixta, that Bobinôt's got sense enough to come in out of a cyclone."

She went and stood at the window with a greatly disturbed look on her face. She wiped the frame that was clouded with moisture. It was stiflingly hot. Alcée got up and joined her at the window, looking over her shoulder. The rain was coming down in sheets obscuring the view of far-off cabins and enveloping the distant wood in a gray mist. The playing of the lightning was incessant. A bolt struck a tall chinaberry tree at the edge of the field. It filled all visible space with a blinding glare, and the crash seemed to invade the very boards they stood upon.

Calixta put her hands to her eyes, and with a cry, staggered backward. Alcée's arm encircled her, and for an instant he drew her close and spasmodically to him.

"*Bonté!*" she cried, releasing herself from his encircling arm and retreating from the window, "the house'll go next! If I only knew w'ere Bibi was!" She would not compose herself; she would not be seated. Alcée clasped her shoulders and looked into her face. The contact of her warm, palpitating body when he had unthinkingly drawn her into his arms had aroused all the old-time infatuation and desire for her flesh.

"Calixta," he said, "don't be frightened. Nothing can happen. The house is too low to be struck, with so many tall trees standing about. There! aren't you going to be quiet? say, aren't you?" He pushed her hair back from her face that was warm and steaming. Her lips were as red and moist as pomegranate seed. Her white neck and a glimpse of her full, firm bosom disturbed him powerfully. As she glanced up at him the fear in her liquid blue eyes had given place to a drowsy gleam that unconsciously betrayed a sensuous desire. He looked down into her eyes, and there was nothing for him to do but to gather her lips in a kiss. It reminded him of Assumption.

"Do you remember—in Assumption, Calixta?" he asked in a low voice broken by passion. Oh! she remembered; for in Assumption he had kissed her and kissed and kissed her; until his senses would well nigh fail, and to save her he would resort to a desperate flight. If she was not an immaculate dove in those days, she was still inviolate; a

passionate creature whose very defenselessness had made her defense, against which his honor forbade him to prevail. Now—well, now—her lips seemed in a manner free to be tasted, as well as her round, white throat and her whiter breasts.

They did not heed the crashing torrents, and the roar of the elements made her laugh as she lay in his arms. She was a revelation in that dim, mysterious chamber, as white as the couch she lay upon. Her firm, elastic flesh that was knowing for the first time its birthright was like a creamy lily that the sun invites to contribute its breath and perfume to the undying life of the world.

The generous abundance of her passion, without guile or trickery, was like a white flame which penetrated and found response in depths of his own sensuous nature that had never yet been reached.

When he touched her breasts they gave themselves up in quivering ecstasy, inviting his lips. Her mouth was a fountain of delight. And when he possessed her, they seemed to swoon together at the very borderland of life's mystery.

He stayed cushioned upon her, breathless, dazed, enervated, with his heart beating like a hammer upon her. With one hand she clasped his head, her lips lightly touching his forehead. The other hand stroked with a soothing rhythm his muscular shoulders.

The growl of the thunder was distant and passing away. The rain beat softly upon the shingles, inviting them to drowsiness and sleep. But they dared not yield.

The rain was over, and the sun was turning the glistening green world into a palace of gems. Calixta, on the gallery, watched Alcée ride away. He turned and smiled at her with a beaming face; and she lifted her pretty chin in the air and laughed aloud.

III

Bobinôt and Bibi, trudging home, stopped without at the cistern to make themselves presentable.

"My! Bibi, w'at will yo' mama say! You ought to be ashamed'. You oughtn' put on those good pants. Look at 'em! An' that mud on yo' collar! How you got that mud on yo' collar, Bibi? I never saw such a boy!" Bibi was the picture of pathetic resignation. Bobinôt was the embodiment of serious solicitude as he strove to remove from his own person and his son's the signs of their tramp over heavy roads and through wet fields. He scraped the mud off Bibi's bare legs and feet with a stick and carefully removed all traces from his heavy brogans.

Then, prepared for the worst—the meeting with an overscrupulous housewife, they entered cautiously at the back door.

Calixta was preparing supper. She had set the table and was dripping coffee at the hearth. She sprang up as they came in.

“Oh, Bobinôt! You back! My! but I was uneasy. W’ere you been during the rain? An’ Bibi? he ain’t wet? he ain’t hurt?” She had clasped Bibi and was kissing him effusively. Bobinôt’s explanations and apologies which he had been composing all along the way, died on his lips as Calixta felt him to see if he were dry, and seemed to express nothing but satisfaction at their safe return.

“I brought you some shrimps, Calixta,” offered Bobinôt, hauling the can from his ample side pocket and laying it on the table.

“Shrimps! Oh, Bobinôt! you too good fo’ anything! and she gave him a smacking kiss on the cheek that resounded. “*Vous répondez*, we’ll have a fea’ to night! umph-umph!”

Bobinôt and Bibi began to relax and enjoy themselves, and when the three seated themselves at table they laughed much and so loud that anyone might have heard them as far away as Laballière’s.

IV

Alcée Laballière wrote to his wife, Clarisse, that night. It was a loving letter, full of tender solicitude. He told her not to hurry back, but if she and the babies liked it at Biloxi, to stay a month longer. He was getting on nicely; and though he missed them, he was willing to bear the separation a while longer—realizing that their health and pleasure were the first things to be considered.

V

As for Clarisse, she was charmed upon receiving her husband’s letter. She and the babies were doing well. The society was agreeable; many of her old friends and acquaintances were at the bay. And the first free breath since her marriage seemed to restore the pleasant liberty of her maiden days. Devoted as she was to her husband, their intimate conjugal life was something which she was more than willing to forgo for a while.

So the storm passed and everyone was happy.

A March Wind



ALICE BROWN



WHEN THE CLOUDS HUNG LOW, or chimneys refused to draw, or the bread soured overnight, a pessimistic public, turning for relief to the local drama, said that Amelia Titcomb had married a tramp. But as soon as the heavens smiled again, it was conceded that she must have been getting lonely in her middle age, and that she had taken the way of wisdom so to furbish up mansions for the coming years. Whatever was set down on either side of the page, Amelia did not care. She was wholeheartedly content with her husband and their farm.

It had happened, one autumn day, that she was trying, all alone, to clean out the cistern. This was while she was still Amelia Titcomb, innocent that there lived a man in the world who could set his foot upon her maiden state, and flourish there. She was an impatient creature. She never could delay for a fostering time to put her plants into the ground, and her fall cleaning was done long before the flies were gone. So, today, while other house mistresses sat cozily by the fire, awaiting a milder season, she was toiling up and down the ladder set in the cistern, dipping pails of sediment from the bottom, and, hardy as she was, almost repenting her of a too-fierce desire. Her thick brown hair was roughened and blown about her face, her cheeks bloomed out in a frosty pink, and the plaid kerchief, tied in a hard knot under her chin,

seemed foolishly ineffectual against the cold. Her hands ached, holding the pail, and she rebelled inwardly against the inclemency of the time. It never occurred to her that she could have put off this exacting job. She would sooner have expected heaven to put off the weather. Just as she reached the top of the cistern, and lifted her pail of refuse over the edge, a man appeared from the other side of the house, and stood confronting her. He was tall and gaunt, and his deeply graven face was framed by grizzled hair. Amelia had a rapid thought that he was not so old as he looked; experience, rather than years, must have wrought its trace upon him. He was leading a little girl, dressed with a very patent regard for warmth, and none for beauty. Amelia, with a quick, feminine glance, noted that the child's bungled skirt and hideous waist had been made from an old army overcoat. The little maid's brown eyes were sweet and seeking; they seemed to petition for something. Amelia's heart did not respond; at that time, she had no reason for thinking she was fond of children. Yet she felt a curious disturbance at sight of the pair. She afterward explained it adequately to the man, by asserting that they looked as odd as Dick's hatband.

"Want any farmwork done?" asked he. "Enough to pay for a night's lodgin'?" His voice sounded strangely soft from one so large and rugged. It hinted at unused possibilities. But though Amelia felt impressed, she was conscious of little more than her own cold and stiffness, and she answered sharply—

"No, I don't. I don't calculate to hire, except in hayin' time, an' then I don't take tramps."

The man dropped the child's hand, and pushed her gently to one side.

"Stan' there, Rosie," said he. Then he went forward, and drew the pail from Amelia's unwilling grasp. "Where do you empt' it?" he asked. "There? It ought to be carried further. You don't want to let it gully down into that beet bed. Here, I'll see to it."

Perhaps this was the very first time in Amelia's life that a man had offered her an unpaid service for chivalry alone. And somehow, though she might have scoffed, knowing what the tramp had to gain, she believed in him and in his kindness. The little girl stood by, as if she were long used to doing as she had been told, with no expectation of difficult reasons; and the man, as soberly, went about his task. He emptied the cistern, and cleansed it, with plentiful washings. Then, as if guessing by instinct what he should find, he went into the kitchen, where were two tubs full of the water which Amelia had pumped up at the start. It had to be carried back again to the cistern; and when the job was quite finished, he opened the bulkhead, set the tubs in the cellar,

and then, covering the cistern and cellar-case, rubbed his cold hands on his trousers, and turned to the child.

"Come, Rosie," said he, "we'll be goin'."

It was a very effective finale, but still Amelia suspected no trickery. The situation seemed to her, just as the two new actors did, entirely simple, like the course of nature. Only, the day was a little warmer because they had appeared. She had a new sensation of welcome company. So it was that, quite to her own surprise, she answered as quickly as he spoke, and her reply also seemed an inevitable part of the drama:

"Walk right in. It's 'most dinnertime, an' I'll put on the pot." The two stepped in before her, and they did not go away.

Amelia herself never quite knew how it happened; but, like all the other natural things of life, this had no need to be explained. At first, there were excellent reasons for delay. The man, whose name proved to be Enoch Willis, was a marvelous hand at a blow, and she kept him a week, splitting some pine knots that defied her and the boy who ordinarily chopped her wood. At the end of the week, Amelia confessed that she was "terrible tired seein' Rosie round in that gormin' kind of a dress," so she cut and fitted her a neat little gown from her own red cashmere. That was the second reason. Then the neighbors heard of the mysterious guest, and dropped in, to place and label him. At first, following the lead of undiscouraged fancy, they declared that he must be some of cousin Silas's connections from Omaha; but even before Amelia had time to deny that, his ignorance of local tradition denied it for him. He must have heard of this or that, by way of cousin Silas; but he owned to nothing defining place or time, save that he had been in the war—"all through it." He seemed to be a man quite weary of the past and indifferent to the future. After a half hour's talk with him, unseasonable callers were likely to withdraw, perhaps into the pantry, whither Amelia had retreated to escape catechism, and remark jovially, "Well, 'Melia, you ain't told us who your company is!"

"Mr. Willis," said Amelia. She was emulating his habit of reserve. It made a part of her new loyalty.

Even to her, Enoch had told no tales; and strangely enough, she was quite satisfied. She trusted him. He did say that Rosie's mother was dead; for the last five years, he said, she had been out of her mind. At that, Amelia's heart gave a fierce, amazing leap. It struck a note she never knew, and wakened her to life and longing. She was glad Rosie's mother had not made him too content. He went on a step or two into the story of his life. His wife's last illness had eaten up the little place, and after she went, he got no work. So, he tramped. He must go again. Amelia's voice sounded sharp and thin, even to her, as she answered,

"Go! I dunno what you want to do that for. Rosie's terrible contented here."

His brown eyes turned upon her in a kindly glance.

"I've got to make a start somewhere," said he. "I've been thinkin' a machine shop's the best thing. I shall have to depend on somethin' better 'n days' works."

Amelia flushed the painful red of emotion without beauty.

"I dunno what we're all comin' to," said she brokenly.

Then the tramp knew. He put his gnarled hand over one of hers. Rosie looked up curiously from the speckled beans she was counting into a bag, and then went on singing to herself an unformed, baby song. "Folks'll talk," said Enoch gently. "They do now. A man an' woman ain't never too old to be hauled up, an' made to answer for livin'. If I was younger, an' had suthin' to depend on, you'd see; but I'm no good now. The better part o' my life's gone."

Amelia flashed at him a pathetic look, half agony over her own lost pride, and all a longing of maternal love.

"I don't want you should be younger," said she. And next week they were married.

Comment ran races with itself, and brought up nowhere. The treasuries of local speech were all too poor to clothe so wild a venture. It was agreed that there's no fool like an old fool, and that folks who ride to market may come home afoot. Everybody forgot that Amelia had had no previous romance, and dismally pictured her as going through the woods, and getting a crooked stick at last. Even the milder among her judges were not content with prophesying the betrayal of her trust alone. They argued from the tramp nature to inevitable results, and declared it would be a mercy if she were not murdered in her bed. According to the popular mind, a tramp is a distinct species, with latent tendencies toward crime. It was recalled that a white woman had, in the old days, married a comely Indian, whose first drink of firewater, after six months of blameless happiness, had sent him raging home, to kill her "in her tracks." Could a tramp, pledged to the traditions of an awful brotherhood, do less? No, even in honor, no! Amelia never knew how the tide of public apprehension surged about her, nor how her next-door neighbor looked anxiously out, the first thing on rising, to exclaim, with a sigh of relief, and possibly a dramatic pang, "There! her smoke's a-goin'."

Meantime, the tramp fell into all the usages of life indoors; and without, he worked revolution. He took his natural place at the head of affairs, and Amelia stood by, rejoicing. Her besetting error of doing things at the wrong moment had disarranged great combinations as well

as small. Her impetuosity was constantly misleading her, bidding her try, this one time, whether harvest might not follow faster on the steps of spring. Enoch's mind was of another cast. For him, tradition reigned, and law was ever laying out the way. Some months after their marriage, Amelia had urged him to take away the winter banking about the house, for no reason save that the Mardens clung to theirs; but he only replied that he'd known of cold snaps way on into May, and he guessed there was no particular hurry. The very next day brought a bitter air, laden with sleet, and Amelia, shivering at the open door, exulted in her feminine soul at finding him triumphant on his own ground. Enoch seemed, as usual, unconscious of victory. His immobility had no personal flavor. He merely acted from an inevitable devotion to the laws of life; and however often they might prove him right, he never seemed to reason that Amelia was consequently wrong. Perhaps that was what made it so pleasant to live with him.

It was "easy sleddin' " now. Amelia grew very young. Her cheeks gained a bloom, her eyes brightened. She even, as the matrons noticed, took to crimping her hair. They looked on with a pitying awe. It seemed a fearsome thing, to do so much for a tramp who would only kill you in the end. Amelia stepped deftly about the house. She was a large woman, whose ways had been devoid of grace; but now the richness of her spiritual condition informed her with a charm. She crooned a little about her work. Singing voice she had none, but she grew into a way of putting words together, sometimes a line from the psalms, sometimes a name she loved, and chanting the sounds, in unrecorded melody. Meanwhile, little Rosie, always irreproachably dressed, with a jealous care lest she fall below the popular standard, roamed in and out of the house, and lightened its dull intervals. She, like the others, grew at once very happy, because, like them, she accepted her place without a qualm, as if it had been hers from the beginning. They were simple natures, and when their joy came, they knew how to meet it.

But if Enoch was content to follow the beaten ways of life, there was one window through which he looked into the upper heaven of all: thereby he saw what it is to create. He was a born mechanic. A revolving wheel would set him to dreaming, and still him to that lethargy of mind which is an involuntary sharing in the things that are. He could lose himself in the life of rhythmic motion; and when he discovered rusted springs or cogs unprepared to fulfill their purpose, he fell upon them with the ardor of a worshiper, and tried to set them right. Amelia thought he should have invented something, and he confessed that he had invented many things, but somehow failed in getting them on the market. That process he mentioned with the indifference

of a man to whom a practical outcome is vague, and who finds in the ideal a bright reality. Even Amelia could see that to be a maker was his joy, to reap rewards of making was another and a lower task.

One cold day in the early spring, he went "up garret" to hunt out an old saddle, gathering mildew there, and came upon a greater treasure, a disabled clock. He stepped heavily down, bearing it aloft in both hands.

"See here, 'Melia," asked he, "why don't this go?"

Amelia was scouring tins on the kitchen table. There was a teasing wind outside, with a flurry of snow, and she had acknowledged that the irritating weather made her as nervous as a witch. So she had taken to a job to quiet herself.

"That clock?" she replied. "That was gran'ther Eli's. It give up strikin', an' then the hands stuck, an' I lost all patience with it. So I bought this nickel one, an' carted t' other off into the attic. 'Tain't worth fixin'."

"Worth it!" repeated Enoch. "Well, I guess I'll give it a chance."

He drew a chair to the stove, and there hesitated. "Say, 'Melia," said he, "should you jest as soon I'd bring in that old shoemaker's bench out o' the shed? It's low, an' I could reach my tools off'n the floor."

Amelia lacked the discipline of contact with her kind, but she was nevertheless smooth as silk in her new wifhood.

"Law, yes, bring it along," said she. "It's a good day to clutter up. The' won't be nobody in."

So, while Enoch laid apart the clock with a delicacy of touch known only to square, mechanical fingers, and Rosie played with the button box on the floor, assorting colors and matching white with white, Amelia scoured the tins. Her energy kept pace with the wind; it whirled in gusts and snatches, yet her precision never failed.

"Made up your mind which cow to sell?" she asked, opening a discussion still unsettled, after days of animated talk.

"Ain't much to choose," said Enoch. He had frankly set Amelia right on the subject of livestock; and she smilingly acquiesced in his larger knowledge. "Elbridge True's got a mighty nice Alderney, an' if he's goin' to sell milk another year, he'll be glad to get two good milkers like these. What he wants is ten quarts apiece, no matter if it's bluer 'n a whetstone. I guess I can swap off with him, but I don't want to run arter him. I put the case last Thursday. Mebbe he'll drop round."

"Well," concluded Amelia, "I guess you're pretty sure to do what's right."

The forenoon galloped fast, and it was half past eleven before she thought of dinner.

"Why," said she, "ain't it butcher day? I've been lottin' on a piece o' liver."

"Butcher day is Thursday," said Enoch. "You've lost count."

"My land!" responded Amelia. "Well, I guess we can put up with some fried pork an' apples." There came a long, insistent knock at the outer door. "Good heavens! Who's there! Rosie, you run to the side-light, an' peek. It can't be a neighbor. They'd come right in. I hope my soul it ain't company, a day like this."

Rosie got on her fat legs with difficulty. She held her pinafore full of buttons, but disaster lies in doing too many things at once; there came a slip, a despairing clutch, and the buttons fell over the floor. There were a great many round ones, and they rolled very fast. Amelia washed the sand from her parboiled fingers, and drew a nervous breath. She had a presentiment of coming ill, painfully heightened by her consciousness that the kitchen was "riding out," and that she and her family rode with it. Rosie came running back from her peephole, husky with importance. The errant buttons did not trouble her. She had an eternity of time wherein to pick them up; and, indeed, the chances were that some tall, benevolent being would do it for her.

"It's a man," she said. "He's got on a light coat with bright buttons, and a fuzzy hat. He's got a big nose."

Now, indeed, despair entered into Amelia, and sat enthroned. She sank down on a straight-backed chair, and put her hands on her knees, while the knock came again, a little querulously.

"Enoch," said she, "do you know what's happened? That's cousin Josiah Pease out there." Her voice bore the tragedy of a thousand past encounters, but that Enoch could not know.

"Is it?" asked he, with but a mild appearance of interest. "Want me to go to the door?"

"Go to the door!" echoed Amelia, so stridently that he looked up at her again. "No; I don't want anybody should go to the door till this room's cleared up. If 't w'an't so everlastin' cold, I'd take him right into the clockroom, an' blaze a fire; but he'd see right through that. You gether up them tools an' things, an' I'll help carry out the bench."

If Enoch had not just then been absorbed in a delicate combination of brass, he might have spoken more sympathetically. As it was, he seemed kindly, but remote.

"Look out!" said he, "you'll joggle. No, I guess I won't move. If he's any kind of a man, he'll know what 't is to clean a clock."

Amelia was not a crying woman, but the hot tears stood in her eyes. She was experiencing, for the first time, that helpless pang born from the wounding of pride in what we love.

"Don't you see, Enoch?" she insisted. "This room looks like the Old Boy—an' so do you—an' he'll go home an' tell all the folks at the Ridge. Why, he's heard we're married, an' come over here to spy out the land. He hates the cold. He never stirs till 'way on into June; an' now he's come to find out."

"Find out what?" inquired Enoch absorbedly. "Well, if you're any-ways put to 't, you send him to me." That manly utterance enunciated from a "best-room" sofa, by an Enoch clad in his Sunday suit, would have filled Amelia with rapture; she could have leaned on it as on the Tables of the Law. But, alas! the scene-setting was meager, and though Enoch was very clean, he had no good clothes. He had pointedly refused to buy them with his wife's money until he should have worked on the farm to a corresponding amount. She had loved him for it; but every day his outer poverty hurt her pride. "I guess you better ask him in," concluded Enoch. "Don't you let him bother you."

Amelia turned about with the grand air of a woman repulsed.

"He *don't* bother me," said she, "an' I *will* let him in." She walked to the door, stepping on buttons as she went, and conscious, when she broke them, of a bitter pleasure. It added to her martyrdom.

She flung open the door and called herself a fool in the doing, for the little old man outside was in the act of turning away. In another instant, she might have escaped. But he was only too eager to come back again, and it seemed to Amelia as if he would run over her, in his desire to get in.

"There! there! 'Melia," said he, pushing past her, "can't stop to talk till I git near the fire. Guess you were settin' in the kitchen, wa'n't ye? Don't make no stranger o' me. That your man?"

She had shut the door, and entered, exasperated anew by the rising wind. "That's my husband," said she coldly. "Enoch, here's cousin Josiah Pease."

Enoch looked up benevolently over his spectacles, and put out a horny left hand, the while the other guarded his heap of treasures. "Pleased to meet you, sir," said he. "You see I'm tinkerin' a clock."

To Enoch, the explanation was enough. All the simple conventions of his life might well wait upon a reason potent as this. Josiah Pease went to the stove, and stood holding his tremulous hands over a cover. He was a little man, eclipsed in a butternut coat of many capes, and his parchment face shaded gradually up from it, as if into a harder medium. His eyes were light, and they had an exceedingly uncomfortable way of darting from one thing to another, like some insect born to spear and sting. His head was entirely bald, all save a thin fringe of hair not worth mentioning, since it disappeared so effectually beneath his collar; and

his general antiquity was grotesquely emphasized by two sets of aggressive teeth, displaying their falsity from every crown.

Amelia took out the broom and began sweeping up buttons. She had an acrid consciousness that by sacrificing them she was somehow completing the tragedy of her day. Rosie gave a little cry; but Amelia pointed to the corner where stood the child's chair, exhumed from the attic, after forty years of rest. "You set there," she said, in an undertone, "an' keep still."

Rosie obeyed without a word. Such an atmosphere had not enveloped her since she entered this wonderful house. Remembering vaguely the days when her own mother had "spells," and she and her father effaced themselves until times should change, she folded her little hands, and lapsed back into a condition of mental servitude.

Meanwhile, Amelia followed nervously in the track of Enoch's talk with cousin Josiah, though her mind kept its undercurrent of foolish musing. Like all of us, snatched up by the wheels of great emergencies, she caught at trifles while they whirled her round. Here were "soldier-buttons." All the other girls had collected them, though she, having no lover in the war, had traded for her few. Here were the gold-stones that held her changeable silk, there the little clouded pearls from her sister's raglan. Annie had died in youth; its glamour still enwrapped her. Poor Annie! But Rosie had seemed to bring her back. Amelia swept litter, buttons and all, into the dustpan, and marched to the stove to throw her booty in. Nobody marked her save Rosie, whose playthings were endangered; but Enoch's very obtuseness to the situation was what stayed her hand. She carried the dustpan away into a closet, and came back to gather up her tins. A cold rage of nervousness beset her, so overpowering that she herself was amazed at it.

Meantime, Josiah Pease had divested himself of his coat, and drawn the grandfather chair into a space behind the stove.

"You a clock-mender by trade?" he asked of Enoch.

"No," said Enoch absently, "I ain't got any reg'lar trade."

"Jest goin' round the country?" amended cousin Josiah, with the preliminary insinuation Amelia knew so well. He was, it had been said, in the habit of inventing lies, and challenging other folks to stick to 'em. But Enoch made no reply. He went soberly on with his work.

"Law, 'Melia, to think o' your bein' married," continued Josiah, turning to her. "I never should ha' thought that o' you."

"I never thought it of myself," said Amelia tartly. "You don't know what you'll do till you're tried."

"No! no!" said Josiah Pease. "Never in the world. You remember Sally Flint, how plain-spoken she is? Well, Betsy Marden's darter Ann

rode down to the poorhouse t' other day with some sweet trade, an' took a young sprig with her. He turned his back a minute, to look out o' winder, an' Sally spoke right up, as ye might say, afore him. 'That your beau?' says she. Well, o' course Ann couldn't own it, an' him right there, so to speak. So she shook her head. 'Well, I'm glad on 't,' says Sally. 'If I couldn't have anything to eat, I'd have suthin' to look at!' He was the most unsignifyin'est creatur' you ever put your eyes on. But they say Ann's started in on her clo'es."

Amelia's face had grown scarlet. "I dunno's any such speech is called for here," said she, in a furious self-betrayal. Josiah Pease had always been able to storm her reserves.

"Law, no," answered he comfortably. "It come into my mind, that's all."

She looked at Enoch with a passionate sympathy, knowing too well how the hidden sting was intended to work. But Enoch had not heard. He was absorbed in a finer problem of brass and iron; and though Amelia had wished to save him from hurt, in that instant she scorned him for his blindness. "I guess I shall have to ask you to move," she said to her husband coldly. "I've got to git to that stove, if we're goin' to have any dinner today."

It seemed to her that even Enoch might take the hint and clear away his rubbish. Her feelings might have been assuaged by a clean hearth and some acquiescence in her own mood. But he only moved back a little and went on fitting and musing. He was not thinking of her in the least, nor even of Josiah Pease. His mind had entered its brighter, more alluring world. She began to fry her pork and apples, with a perfunctory attempt at conversation. "You don't often git round so early in the spring," said she.

"No," returned cousin Josiah. "I kind o' got started out, this time, I don't rightly know why. I guess I've had you in mind more of late, for some Tiverton folks come over our way, tradin', an' they brought all the news. It sort o' stirred me up to come."

Amelia turned her apples vigorously, well aware that the slices were breaking. That made a part of her bitter day.

"Folks needn't take the trouble to carry news about me," she said. There was an angry gleam in her eyes. "If anybody wants to know anything, let 'em come right here, an' I'll settle 'em." The ring of her voice penetrated even to Enoch's perception, and he looked up in mild surprise. She seemed to have thrown open, for an instant, a little window into a part of her nature he had never seen.

"How good them apples smell!" said Josiah innocently. "Last time I had 'em was down to cousin Amasa True's, he that married his third

wife, an' she run through all he had. I went down to see 'em arter the vandoo, you know they got red o' most everything, an' they had fried pork an' apples for dinner. Old Bashaby dropped in. 'Law!' says she. 'Fried pork an' apples! Well, I call that livin' pretty nigh the wind!' " Josiah chuckled. He was very warm now, and the savory smell of the dish he decried was mounting to what served him for fancy. " 'Melia, you ain't never had your teeth out, have ye?" he asked, as one who spoke from richer memories.

"I guess my teeth'll last me as long as I want 'em," said Amelia curtly.

"Well, I did n't know. They looked real white an' firm last time I see 'em, but you never can tell how they be underneath. I knew the folks would ask me when I got home. I thought I'd speak."

"Dinner's ready," said Amelia. She turned an alien look upon her husband. "You want to wash your hands?"

Enoch rose cheerfully. He had got to a hopeful place with the clock.

"Set ri' down," said he. "Don't wait a minute. I'll be along."

So Amelia and the guest began their meal, while little Rosie climbed, rather soberly, into her higher chair, and held out her plate.

"You wait," said Amelia harshly. "Can't you let other folks eat a mouthful before you have to have yours?" Yet as she said it, she remembered, with a remorseful pang, that she had always helped the child first; it had been so sweet to see her pleased and satisfied.

Josiah was never talkative during meals. Not being absolute master of his teeth, his mind dwelt with them. Amelia remembered that, with a malicious satisfaction. But he could not be altogether dumb. That, people said, would never happen to Josiah Pease while he was above-ground.

"That his girl?" he asked, indicating Rosie with his knife, in a gustatory pause.

"Whose?" inquired Amelia willfully.

"His." He pointed again, this time to the back room, where Enoch was still washing his hands.

"Yes."

"Mother dead?"

Amelia sprang from her chair, while Rosie looked at her with the frightened glance of a child to whom some half-forgotten grief has suddenly returned.

"Josiah Pease!" said Amelia. "I never thought a poor, insignificant creatur' like you could rile me so, when I know what you're doin' it for, too. But you've brought it about. Her mother dead? Ain't I been an' married her father?"

"Law, Amelia, do se' down!" said Josiah indulgently. There was a mince pie warming on the back of the stove. He saw it there. "I did n't mean nuthin'. I'll be bound you thought she's dead, or you wouldn't ha' took such a step. I only meant, did ye see her death in the paper, for example, or anything like that?"

"'Melia," called Enoch, from the doorway, "I won't come in to dinner jest now. Elbridge True's drove into the yard. I guess he's got it in mind to talk it over about them cows. I don't want to lose the chance."

"All right," answered Amelia. She took her seat again, while Enoch's footsteps went briskly out through the shed. With the clanging of the door, she felt secure. If she had to deal with Josiah Pease, she could do it better alone, clutching at the certainty that was with her from of old, that, if you could only keep your temper with cousin Josiah, you had one chance of victory. Flame out at him, and you were lost. "Some more potatoes?" asked she, with a deceptive calm.

"Don't care if I do," returned Josiah, selecting greedily, his fork hovering in air. "Little mite watery, ain't they? Dig 'em yourself?"

"We dug 'em," said Amelia coldly.

Rosie stepped down from her chair, unnoticed. To Amelia, she was then no bigger than some little winged thing flitting about the room in time of tragedy. Our greatest emotions sometimes stay unnamed. At that moment, Amelia was swayed by as tumultuous a love as ever animated damsel of verse or story; but it merely seemed to her that she was an ill-used woman, married to a man for whom she was called on to be ashamed. Rosie tiptoed into the entry, put on her little shawl and hood, and stole out to play in the corn-house. When domestic squalls were gathering, she knew where to go. The great outdoors was safer. Her past had taught her that.

"Don't like to eat with folks, does he? Well, it's all in what you're brought up to."

Amelia was ready with her countercharge. "Have some tea?"

She poured it as if it were poison, and Josiah became conscious of her tragic self-control.

"You ain't eat a thing," said he, with an ostentatious kindliness. He bent forward a little, with the air of inviting a confidence. "Got suthin' on your mind, ain't you, 'Melia?" he whispered. "Kind o' worried? Find he's a drinkin' man?"

Amelia was not to be beguiled, even by that anger which veils itself as justice. She looked at him steadily, with scorching eyes.

"You ain't took any sugar," said she. "There 't is, settin' by you. Help yourself."

Josiah addressed himself to his tea, and then Amelia poured him another cup. She had some fierce satisfaction in making it good and strong. It seemed to her that she was heartening her adversary for the fray, and she took pleasure in doing it effectually. So great was the spirit within her that she knew he could not be too valiant, for her keener joy in laying him low. Then they rose from the table, and Josiah took his old place by the stove, while Amelia began carrying the dishes to the sink. Her mind was a little hazy now; her next move must depend on his, and cousin Josiah, somewhat drowsy from his good dinner, was not at once inclined to talk. Suddenly he raised his head snakily from those sunken shoulders, and pointed a lean finger to the window.

"'Melia!" cried he sharply. "I'll be buttered if he ain't been and traded off both your cows. My Lord! be you goin' to stan' there an' let them two cows go?"

Amelia gave one swift glance from the window, following the path marked out by that insinuating index. It was true. Elbridge was driving her two cows out of the yard, and her husband stood by, watching him. She walked quietly into the entry, and Josiah laid his old hands together in the rapturous certainty that she was going to open the door, and send her anger forth. But Amelia only took down his butternut coat from the nail, and returned with it, holding it ready for him to insert his arms.

"Here's your coat," said she, with that strange, deceptive calmness. "Stan' up, an' I'll help you put it on."

Josiah looked at her with helplessly open mouth and eyes so vacuous that Amelia felt, even at that moment, the grim humor of his plight.

"I was in hopes he'd harness up"—he began, but she ruthlessly cut him short.

"Stan' up! Here, put t' other arm in fust. This han'kercher yours? Goes round your neck? There 't is. Here's your hat. Got any mittens? There they be, in your pocket. This way. This is the door you come in, an' this is the door you'll go out of." She preceded him, her head thrown up, her shoulders back. Amelia had no idea of dramatic values, but she was playing an effective part. She reached the door and flung it open, but Josiah, a poor figure in its huddled capes, still stood abjectly in the middle of the kitchen. "Come!" she called peremptorily. "Come, Josiah Pease! Out you go." And Josiah went, though, contrary to his usual habit, he did not talk. He quavered uncertainly down the steps, and Amelia called a halt. "Josiah Pease!"

He turned, and looked up at her. His mouth had dropped, and he was nothing but a very helpless old child. Vicious as he was, Amelia realized the mental poverty of her adversary, and despised herself for despising him. "Josiah Pease!" she repeated. "This is the end. Don't

you darken my doors ag'in. I've done with you, egg an' bird!" She closed the door, shutting out Josiah and the keen spring wind, and went back to the window to watch him down the drive. His back looked poor and mean. It emphasized the pettiness of her victory. Even at that moment, she realized that it was the poorer part of her which had resented attack on a citadel which should be impregnable as time itself. Just then Enoch stepped into the kitchen behind her, and his voice jarred upon her tingling nerves.

"Well," said he, more jovially than he was wont to speak, "I guess I've made a good trade for ye. Company gone? Come here an' se' down while I eat, an' I'll tell ye all about it."

Amelia turned about and walked slowly up to him, by no volition of her conscious self. Again love, that august creature, veiled itself in an unjust anger, because it was love and nothing else.

"You've made a good bargain, have you?" she repeated. "You've sold my cows, an' had 'em drove off the place without if or but. That's what you call a good bargain!" Her voice frightened her. It amazed the man who heard. These two middle-aged people were waking up to passions neither had felt in youth. Life was strong in them because love was there.

"Why, 'Melia!" said the man. "Why, 'Melia!"

Amelia was hurried on before the wind of her destiny. Her voice grew sharper. Little white stripes, like the lashes from a whip, showed themselves on her cheeks. She seemed to be speaking from a dream, which left her no will save that of speaking.

"It's been so ever sence you set foot in this house. Have I had my say once? Have I been mistress on my own farm? No! You took the head o' things, an' you've kep' it. What's mine is yours."

Her triumph over Josiah seemed to be strangely repeated; the scene was almost identical. The man before her stood with his hands hanging by his sides, the fingers limp, in an attitude of the profoundest patience. He was thinking things out. She knew that. Her hurrying mind anticipated all he might have said, and would not. And because he had too abiding a gentleness to say it, the insanity of her anger rose anew. "I'm the laughin'-stock o' the town," she went on bitterly. "There ain't a man or woman in it that don't say I've married a tramp."

Enoch winced, with a sharp, brief quiver of the lips; but before she could dwell upon the sight, to the resurrection of her tenderness, he turned away from her, and went over to the bench.

"I guess I'll move this back where 't was," he said, in a very still voice, and Amelia stood watching him, conscious of a new and bitterer

pang: a fierce contempt that he could go on with his poor, methodical way of living, when greater issues waited at the door. He moved the bench into its old place, gathered up the clock, with its dismantled machinery, and carried it into the attic. She heard his step on the stairs, regular and unhalting, and despised him again; but in all those moments, the meaning of his movements had not struck her. When he came back, he brought in the broom; and while he swept up the fragments of his work, Amelia stood and watched him. He carried the dustpan and broom away to their places, but he did not reenter the room. He spoke to her from the doorway, and she could not see his face.

"I guess you won't mind if I leave the clock as 't is. It needs some new cogs, an' if anybody should come along, he wouldn't find it any the worse for what I've done. I've jest thought it over about the cows, an' I guess I'll leave that, too, jest as it is. I made you a good bargain, an' when you come to think it over, I guess you'd ruther it'd stan' so than run the resk of havin' folks make a handle of it. Good-by, 'Melia. You've been good to me, better 'n anybody ever was in the world."

She heard his step, swift and steady, through the shed and out at the door. He was gone. Amelia turned to the window, to look after him, and then, finding he had not taken the driveway, she ran into the bedroom, to gaze across the fields. There he was, a lonely figure, striking vigorously out. He seemed glad to go; and seeing his haste, her heart hardened against him. She gave a little disdainful laugh.

"Well," said Amelia, "*that's* over. I'll wash my dishes now."

Coming back into the kitchen, with an assured step, she moved calmly about her work, as if the world were there to see. Her pride enveloped her like a garment. She handled the dishes as if she scorned them, yet her method and care were exquisite. Presently there came a little imperative pounding at the side door. It was Rosie. She had forgotten the cloudy atmosphere of the house, and being cold, had come, in all her old, imperious certainty of love and warmth, to be let in. Amelia stopped short in her work, and an ugly frown roughened her brow. Josiah Pease, with all his evil imaginings, seemed to be at her side, his lean forefinger pointing out the baseness of mankind. In that instant, she realized where Enoch had gone. He meant to take the three o'clock train where it halted, down at the Crossing, and he had left the child behind. Tearing off her apron, she threw it over her head. She ran to the door, and, opening it, almost knocked the child down, in her haste to be out and away. Rosie had lifted her frosty face in a smile of welcome, but Amelia did not see it. She gathered the child in her arms,

and hurried down the steps, through the bars, and along the narrow path toward the pine woods. The sharp brown stubble of the field merged into the thin grasses of the greener lowland, and she heard the trickling of the little dark brook, where gentians lived in the fall, and where, still earlier, the cardinal flower and forget-me-not crowded in lavish color. She knew every inch of the way; her feet had an intelligence of their own. The farm was a part of her inherited life; but at that moment, she prized it as nothing beside that newly discovered wealth which she was rushing to cast away. Rosie had not striven in the least against her capture. She knew too much of life, in some patient fashion, to resist it, in any of its phases. She put her arms about Amelia's neck, to cling the closer, and Amelia, turning her face while she staggered on, set her lips passionately to the little sleeve.

"You cold?" asked she — "*dear?*" But she told herself it was a kiss of farewell.

She stepped deftly over the low stonewall into the Marden woods, and took the slippery downward path, over pine needles. Sometimes a rounded root lay above the surface, and she stumbled on it; but the child only tightened her grasp. Amelia walked and ran with the pre-science of those without fear; for her eyes were unseeing, and her thoughts hurrying forward, she depicted to herself the little drama at its close. She would be at the Crossing and away again, before the train came in; nobody need guess her trouble. Enoch must be there, waiting. She would drop the child at his side — the child he had deserted — and before he could say a word, turn back to her desolate home. And at the thought, she kissed the little sleeve again, and thought how good it would be if she could only be there again, though alone, in the shielding walls of her house, and the parting were over and done. She felt her breath come chokingly.

"You'll have to walk a minute," she whispered, setting the child down at her side. "There's time enough. I can't hurry."

At that instant, she felt the slight warning of the ground beneath her feet, shaken by another step, and saw, through the pines, her husband running toward her. Rosie started to meet him, with a little cry, but Amelia thrust her aside, and hurried swiftly on in advance, her eyes feeding upon his face. It had miraculously changed. Sorrow, the great despair of life, had eaten into it, and aged it more than years of patient want. His eyes were like lamps burned low, and the wrinkles under them had guttered into misery. But to Amelia, his look had all the sweet familiarity of faces we shall see in Paradise. She did not stop to interpret his meeting glance, nor ask him to read hers. Coming upon

him like a whirlwind, she put both her shaking hands on his shoulders, and laid her wet face to his.

"Enoch! Enoch!" she cried sharply, "in the name of God, come home with me!"

She felt him trembling under her hands, but he only put up his own, and very gently loosed the passionate grasp. "There! there!" he said, in a whisper. "Don't feel so bad. It's all right. I jest turned back for Rosie. Mebbe you won't believe it, but I forgot all about her."

He lowered his voice, for Rosie had gone close to him, and laid her hands clingingly upon his coat. She did not understand, but she could wait. A branch had almost barred the path, and Amelia, her dull gaze fallen, noted idly how bright the moss had kept, and how the scarlet cups enriched it. Her strength would not sustain her, void of his, and she sank down on the wood, her hands laid limply in her lap. "Enoch," she said, from her new sense of the awe of life, "don't lay up anything ag'inst me. You couldn't if you knew."

"Knew what?" asked Enoch gently. He did not forget that circumstance had laid a blow at the roots of his being; but he could not turn away while she still suffered.

Amelia began, stumblingly,

"He talked about you. I couldn't stan' it."

"Did you believe it?" he queried sternly.

"There wa'n't anything to believe. That's neither here nor there. But—Enoch, if anybody should cut my right hand off—Enoch"—Her voice fell brokenly. She was a New England woman, accustomed neither to analyze nor talk. She could only suffer in the elemental way of dumb things who sometimes need a language of the heart. One thing she knew. The man was hers; and if she reft herself away from him, then she must die.

He had taken Rosie's hand, and Amelia was aware that he turned away.

"I don't want to bring up anything," he said hesitatingly, "but I couldn't stan' bein' any less 'n other men would, jest because the woman had the money, an' I hadn't. I dunno's 't was exactly fair about the cows, but somehow you kind o' set me at the head o' things, in the beginnin', an' it never come into my mind"—

Amelia sat looking wanly past him. She began to see how slightly argument would serve. Suddenly the conventions of life fell away from her and left her young.

"Enoch," she said vigorously, "you've got to take me. Somehow, you've got to. Talkin' won't make you see that what I said never meant

no more than the wind that blows. But you've got to keep me, or remember, all your life, how you murdered me by goin' away. The farm's come between us. Le's leave it! It's 'most time for the cars. You take me with you now. If you tramp, I'll tramp. If you work out, so'll I. But where you go, I've got to go, too."

Some understanding of her began to creep upon him; he dropped the child's hand, and came a step nearer. Enoch, in these latter days of his life, had forgotten how to smile; but now a sudden, mirthful gleam struck upon his face, and lighted it with the candles of hope. He stood beside her, and Amelia did not look at him.

"Would you go with me, 'Melia?" he asked.

"I'm goin'," said she doggedly. Her case had been lost, but she could not abandon it. She seemed to be holding to it in the face of righteous judgment.

"S'pose I don't ask you?"

"I'll foller on behind."

"Don't ye want to go home, an' lock up, an' git a bunnit?"

She put one trembling hand to the calico apron about her head.

"No."

"Don't ye want to leave the key with some o' the neighbors?"

"I don't want anything in the world but you," owned Amelia shamelessly.

Enoch bent suddenly, and drew her to her feet. "'Melia," said he, "you look up here."

She raised her drawn face and looked at him, not because she wished, but because she must. In her abasement, there was no obedience which she would deny him. But she could only see that he was strangely happy, and so the more removed from her own despair. Enoch swiftly passed his arm about her, and turned her homeward. He laughed a little. Being a man, he must laugh when that bitter ache in the throat presaged more bitter tears.

"Come, 'Melia," said he, "come along home, an' I'll tell you all about the cows. I made a real good bargain. Come, Rosie."

Amelia could not answer. It seemed to her as if love had dealt with her as she had not deserved; and she went on, exalted, afraid of breaking the moment, and knowing only that he was hers again. But just before they left the shadow of the woods, he stopped, holding her still, and their hearts beat together.

"'Melia," said he brokenly, "I guess I never told you in so many words, but it's the truth: if God Almighty was to make me a woman, I'd have her you, not a hair altered. I never cared a straw for any other. I know that now. You're all there is in the world."

When they walked up over the brown field, the sun lay very warmly there with a promise of spring fulfilled. The wind had miraculously died, and soft clouds ran over the sky in flocks. Rosie danced on ahead, singing her queer little song, and Enoch struggled with himself to speak the word his wife might wish.

"'Melia," said he at last, "there ain't anything in my life I couldn't tell you. I jest ain't dwelt on it, that's all. If you want to have me go over it"—

"I don't want anything," said Amelia firmly. Her eyes were suffused, and yet lambent. The light in them seemed to be drinking up their tears. Her steps, she knew, were set within a shining way. At the door only she paused and fixed him with a glance. "Enoch," said she threateningly, "whose cows were them you sold today?"

He opened his lips, but she looked him down. One word he rejected, and then another. His cheeks wrinkled up into obstinate smiling, and he made the grimace of a child over its bitter draught.

"'Melia, it ain't fair," he complained. "No, it ain't. I'll take one of 'em, if you say so, or I'll own it don't make a mite o' difference whose they be. But as to lyin'"—

"Say it!" commanded Amelia. "Whose were they?"

"Mine!" said Enoch. They broke into laughter, like children, and held each other's hands.

"I ain't had a mite o' dinner," said Amelia happily, as they stepped together into the kitchen. "Nor you! An' Rosie did n't eat her pie. You blaze up the fire, an' I'll fry some eggs."

Mrs. Flint's Married Experience



ROSE TERRY COOKE



WELL, MINDWELL, I have counseled a good deal about it. I was happy as the day is long with your father. I don't say but what I cleaved to this world consider'ble more than was good for my growth in grace. He was about the best. But it pleased the Lord to remove him, and it was quite a spell before I could reelly submit: the nateral man rebelled, now I tell you! You can't never tell what it is to lose a companion till you experience it."

A faint color, vanishing as rapidly as it came, almost as if ashamed that it bore witness to the emotion within her, rose to Mindwell Pratt's face as her mother spoke. She was a typical New England woman—pale, serious, with delicate features, grave dark eyes, a tall, slight, undeveloped figure, graceful from mere unconsciousness, awkward and angular otherwise. You could compare her to nothing but some delicate and slender tree of the forest that waves its fragile but hardy branches fresh and green in springtime, and abides undaunted the worst blast of winter, rooted in the fissures of the rock, fed by the bitterest showers, the melting snows, the furious hail that bends but never breaks it; perfect in its place, fitted utterly to its surroundings. Her mother, the Widow Gold, was externally like her; but deep in Mindwell's heart lay a strength of character and acuteness of judgment the elder woman did not possess, and a reticence that forbade her to

express sympathy, even with her mother's sorrow, further than by that reluctant blush; for sympathy implied an expression of her love for her husband—a hidden treasure she could not profane by speech, which found its only demonstration in deeds, and was the chief spring of her active and devoted life as wife and mother.

Mrs. Gold had been a happy woman, as she said, while her husband lived, and had not yet ceased to reproach herself for mourning him so bitterly. The religion of New England at that time was of a stern type: it demanded a spiritual asceticism of its followers, and virtually forbade them to enjoy the blessings of this life by keeping them in horrid and continual dread of "the pains of hell forever," as their Catechism expresses it. It was their purpose to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling under the curse of the law. The gospel was a profound and awful mystery, to be longed for afar off, no more daily bread than the showbread of the Temple.

They lived and worked, and suffered and died, with few exceptions, in an awful sense of flying time, brief probation, an angry God, a certain hell, but a very uncertain heaven. No wonder that they were austere and hard: the wonder was that even natural temperament and mental organization should ever resist this outside pressure, and give play to humor, or fancy, or passion of any sort. Yet in this faithless faith lay elements of wonderful strength. The compelling force of duty made men nobly honest, rigidly upright, just, as far as their narrow views allowed, and true to the outward relations of this life, however they violated their inner principle and meaning. Speculation, defalcation, divorce, were crimes they called by other names than these, and abhorred. Can we say as much for ourselves? However we may sneer at Puritanism, it had its strong virtues; and its outgrowth was honesty, decency, and respect for law. A share of such virtues would be worth much to us now.

Mrs. Gold was "a professor," and it behooved her to submit to the will of God when her husband died. He had been a strong, generous, warm-hearted man; and, though undemonstrative as his race, his wife had been loved and cherished as the very blossom of his life. She was a sweet, fair girl when Ethan Gold married her, clinging and dependent by nature, though education had made her a hard worker; but her fragile beauty and soft temper had attracted the strength and fervor of the man, and their short life together had been exceptionally happy. Then fever struck him down in his full prime; and their only child, a girl of six, could but just remember all her life that she once had a father whose very memory was sacred. Fifteen years of mourning, at first deeply, then steadily, at last habitually, and rather as a form than a feeling, passed away.

Ethan had left his wife with "means"; so that poverty did not vex her. And now Mindwell was a grown woman, and married to Samuel Pratt, a well-to-do young farmer of Colebrook, a hearty, jovial young fellow, whose fun and animal spirits would bubble over in spite of reproofing eyes and tongues, and who came into Mindwell's restrained and reserved life like a burst of sunshine. Are the wild blossoms grateful to the sun that draws them with powerful attraction from the cold sod,

"Where they together,
All the cold weather,
Keep house alone"?

Perhaps their odor and color are for him who brings them to light and delight of life. Mindwell's great fear was that she made an idol of her husband, yet he certainly had not an idea that she did.

If the good soul had stopped to analyze the relation between them, his consciousness would have been found, when formulated, to be, that his wife bore with him as saints do with rather amusing sinners; while he worshiped her as even the most humorous of sinners do sometimes secretly worship saints. But what the wife did not acknowledge, or the husband perceive, became in a few years painfully perceptible to the mother's feminine and maternal instinct. Mindwell treated her with all possible respect and kindness, but she was no longer her first object. There is a strange hunger in the average female heart to be the one and only love of some other heart, which lies at the root of fearful tragedies and long agonies of unspoken pain—a God-given instinct, no doubt, to make the monopoly of marriage dear and desirable, but, like all other instincts, fatal if it be not fulfilled or followed. Utterly wanting in men, who grasp the pluralities of passion as well as of office, this instinct niches itself deepest in the gentlest of women, and was the ruling yet unrecognized motive in the Widow Gold's character. If Mindwell had not had children, perhaps her mother would have been more necessary to her, and more dear; but two babies had followed on her marriage within three years, and her mother-love was a true passion. This the grandmother perceived with a tender jealousy fast growing acute. She loved the little girls, as grandmothers do, with unreasoning and lavish fondness. If there had been a maiden aunt in the family—that unconsidered maid-of-all-work, whose love is felt to be intrusive, while yet the demands on it are insatiable—the Widow Gold would have had at least one sympathetic breast to appeal to; but as it was, she became more and more uneasy and unhappy, and began to make herself

wretched with all the commonplaces she could think of—about her “room being better than her company,” “love runs down, not up,” and the like—till she was really pining, when just at this moment an admirer came upon the scene, and made known the reason of his appearance in a businesslike way.

“Deacon Flint’s in the keepin’-room, mother, wishful to see you,” said Mindwell one day, about five years after her marriage. Deacon Flint was an old acquaintance, known to Mrs. Gold ever since she was a girl in Bassett. When she married, and moved to Denslow, the acquaintance had been partly dropped, though only nine miles lay between them; but she had then her family cares, and Ethan Gold and Amasa Flint were as unlikely to be friends as a Newfoundland dog and a weasel. Since she had come to Colebrook to live with her daughter, she was a little farther still from her Bassett friends, and therefore it was a long time since she had seen the deacon. Meanwhile he had lost his wife, a silent and sickly woman, who crept about and worried through her daily duties for years, spent and fainting when the last supper dish was washed, and aching at early dawn when she had to get up to milk. She did not complain: her duty lay there, in her home, and she did it as long as she could—then she died. This is a common record among our barren hills, which count by thousands their unknown and unsung martyrs. It was a year after her death when Deacon Flint made his first visit to Widow Gold. He was tired of paying Aunt Polly Morse seventy-five cents a week to do housework, though she spun and wove, and made and mended, as faithfully as his wife had done, confiding only to one trusty ear her opinion of her employer.

“He’s a professor, ye know, Isr’el, and I make no doubt but what he’s a good man; but he is dreadful near. Seems as if he reelly begrutched me my vittles sometimes; and there ain’t a grain o’ salt in that house spilt without his findin’ of it out. Now, I don’t calc’late to spill no salt, nor nothin’ else, to waste it; but, land’s sakes! I can’t see like a fly, so’s to scare up every mite of sugar that’s left onto the edges of the paper he fetches it hum in. I wish to gracious he’d get somebody else. I’d ruther do chores for Mirandy Huff than for the deacon.”

Old Israel’s wrinkled face, puckered mouth, and deep-set eyes, twitched with a furtive laugh. He was the village fool, yet shrewder than any man who stopped to jest with him, and a fool only in the satiric sense of jester; for though he had nothing of his own but a tiny brown house and pigpen, and made his living, such as it was, by doing odd jobs, and peddling yeast from the distilleries at Simsbury, he was the most independent man in Bassett, being regardless of public opinion, and not at all afraid of Parson Roberts.

"Well, Aunt Polly," he answered, "you stay by a spell: the deacon won't want ye too long. He's got a sharp eye, now I tell ye, and he's forehanded as fury. Fust you know, Miss Flint'll *come* home, and you'll *go* home."

"Miss Flint!" screamed Aunt Polly. "Why, Isr'el Tucker, you give me such a turn! Poor cretur, she's safe under the mulleins this year back. I guess I shall go when she comes, but 'twon't be till the day o' judgment."

"Then the day o' judgment's near by, Aunt Polly; and I reckon it is for one poor cretur. But you don't somehow seem to take it in. I tell ye the deacon's gone a-courtin'."

"Courtin'! Isr'el! you be a-foolin' of me now, certain sure."

"Not a mite on't. I see him a-ilin' up his old harness yesterday, and a-rubbin' down the mare, and I mistrusted he was up to suthin. And Squire Battle he met him a'most to Colebrook this mornin': I heerd him say so. I put this 'n' that together, and drawed my own influences; and I figgered out that he's gone to Colebrook to see if Widder Gold won't hev him. A wife's a lot cheaper than hired help, and this one's got means."

"For mercy's sakes! You don't suppose Sarepty Gold would look at him, do ye?"

"I never see the woman yet that wouldn't look at a man when he axed her to," was the dry answer. But Aunt Polly was too stunned with her new ideas to retort. She went on, as if the sneer at her sex had not reached her ear—

"Why, she ha'n't no need to marry him: she's got a good home to Sam Pratt's. And there's that farm here that Hi Smith runs on shares, and money in Har'ford bank, they do say. She won't have him: don't ye tell me so."

"Women are mortal queer," replied old Israel.

"If they wa'n't, there wouldn't no men get married," snapped Aunt Polly, who was a contented old maid, and never suspected she was "queer" herself.

"That's so, Aunt Polly. Mabbe it's what Parson Roberts calls a dispensation, and I guess it is. I say for't, a woman must be extry queer to marry Amasy Flint, ef she's even got a chance at Bassett poorhouse."

Yet Israel was right in his prophecy. At that very moment Deacon Flint was sitting bolt upright in a high-backed chair in Sam Pratt's keeping-room, discoursing with the Widow Gold.

Two people more opposite in aspect could hardly be found. Mrs. Gold was not yet fifty, and retained much of her soft loveliness. Her cheek was still round and fair, her pale brown hair but slightly lined

with gray, and the mild light of her eyes shone tenderly yet; though her figure was a little bent, and her hands knotted with work.

She looked fair and young in comparison with the grizzled, stern, hard-favored man before her. A far-off Scotch ancestry had bequeathed to him the high cheekbones and deep-set eyes that gave him so severe an aspect; and to these an aquiline nose, a cruel, pinched mouth, a low forehead, and a sallow, wrinkled skin, added no charms. But the charm of old association brought him a welcome here. Bassett was the home of Mrs. Gold's childhood, and she had a great many questions to ask. Her face gathered color and light as she recalled old affections and sympathies; and the deacon took a certain satisfaction in looking at her. But this was a mere ripple above his serious intention. He meant business, and could not waste time: so, as soon as there came a little lull in Mrs. Gold's fluent reminiscences, he curtly began—

"I came over today on an arrand, Miss Gold—I may say quite a ser'ous arrand. I lost my companion, I suppose ye know, a year ago come September the 10th. She was a good woman, Miss Flint was, savin' and reasonable as ever was."

"I always heard her well spoke of," modestly rejoined the widow.

"Yes, her children praise her in the gates—or they would hev, if she'd had any. I feel her loss. And Scriptor says, 'It is not good for man to be alone.' Scriptor is right. You are a woman that's seen affliction too, Miss Gold: you've passed under the rod. Well, folks must be resigned: professors like you and me have got to set example. We can't fault the Lord when he takes our companions away, and say, 'Why do ye so?' as though 'twas a man done it. We've got this treasure in earthen vessels. Well, to come to the p'int, I come over today to see ef you wa'n't willin' to consider the subject of uniting yourself to me in the bonds of marriage."

"Oh!" said the astonished widow.

"I don't want to hurry ye none," he went on: "take time on't. I should like to get my answer right off; but I can make allowance for bein' onexpected. I'll come agin next week—say this day week. I hope you'll make it a subject of prayer, and I expect you'll get light on your duty by that time. I've got a good house and a good farm, and I'll do well by ye. And, moreover and besides, you know Mr. Pratt's folks are pressed some for room. I expect. I guess they won't stand in the way of your goin' to Bassett. Good-day, good-day."

And the widow received a calm up-and-down handshake, with which decorous caress the deacon—for we cannot call him the lover—departed, leaving Mrs. Gold in a state of pleased amazement, partly because she was a woman and a widow, partly because it was Deacon

Flint who had asked her to marry him; for the deacon was a pillar in Bassett church, owned a large farm and a goodly square house, and was a power in the State, having twice been sent to the General Assembly. She could not but be gratified by the preference, and as she pondered on the matter it grew more feasible. Her girl was hers no longer, but a wife and mother herself; and she who had been all in all to Mindwell was now little more than "grandma" in the house—a sort of suffered and necessary burden on Samuel's hands. But here a home of her own was offered her, a place of dignity among other women—a place where she could ask her children to come to her, and give rather than receive.

There is nothing so attractive to a woman who is no longer young as the idea of a home. The shadow of age and its infirmities affrights her; loneliness is a terror in the future; and the prospect of drifting about here and there, a dependent, poor, proud, unwelcome, when flesh and heart fail, and the ability to labor is gone, makes any permanent shelter a blessed prospect, and draws many a woman into a far more dreadful fate than the workhouse mercies or the colder charity of relatives.

This terror was strong in Mrs. Gold's feeble heart. She was one of the thousands of women who cannot trust what they do not see, and she misjudged her daughter cruelly. Mindwell felt that today, as her mother avowed to her Deacon Flint's offer and her own perplexities. When Mrs. Gold asserted that her daughter could never understand what it was to lose a husband, Mindwell felt a sure but unspoken conviction that the terror of such a bereavement, which confronted her whenever her heart leaped up to meet Samuel, was experience enough for her to interpret thereby the longings of a real bereavement; but she only colored faintly, and answered—

"Well, mother, I don't see my way clear to offer you any advice. You must use your own judgment. You know Samuel and me think everything of having you here; and the children just begin to know grandma by heart. But I don't want to be self-seeking: if it's for your best good, why, we sha'n't neither of us say a word. I don't skerce know how to speak about it, it's so strange like and sudden. I can't say no more than this: if you're going to be happier and better off with Deacon Flint than with your own folks, we haven't no right to hinder you, and we won't."

Mindwell turned away with trembling lips, silent, because strong emotion choked her. If she had fallen on her mother's neck and wept, and begged her to stay, with repeated kisses and warm embrace, Mrs. Gold never would have become Mrs. Flint; but she could not appreciate Mindwell's feeling. She took her conscientious self-control and candor

for indifference, and her elderly lover loomed through this mist in grander proportions than ever. She resolved then and there that it was her duty to accept him.

Mindwell had gone downstairs to find her husband, who sat by the fire, fitting a rake-tail more firmly into a hay rake. He had been caught in a distant field by a heavy shower, and was steaming now close to the fireplace, where a heap of chips was lighted to boil the kettle for tea. Mindwell stole up to him, and laid one hand on his handsome head. He looked up, astonished at the slight caress, and saw his wife's eyes were full of tears.

"What's the matter, darling?" he said in his cheery voice. It was like a kiss to her to have him say "darling," for sweet words were rare among their class; and this was the only one he ever used, kept sacredly, too, for Mindwell.

"O Sam!" she answered, with a quiver in her delicate voice, "don't you think, Deacon Flint wants to marry mother!"

"Thunder an' guns! You don't mean it, wife? Haw, haw, haw! It's as good as a general trainin'. Of all things! What doos she say to't?"

"Well, I'm 'most afraid she favors him a little. He's given her a week's time to consider of it; but, someway, I can't bear to have it thought of."

"Don't pester your head about it, Miss Pratt: you can't make nor meddle in such things. But I'm free to own that I never was more beat in all my days. Why, Amasy Flint is town-talk for nearness an' meanness. He pretends to be as pious as a basket o' chips, but I hain't no vital faith in that kind o' pious. I b'lieve in my soul he's a darned old hypocrite."

"O Sam, Sam! you hadn't ought to judge folks."

"I suppose I hadn't, reelly; but you know what Scripter says somewhere or 'nother, that some folks's sins are open, an' go to judgment beforehand, and I guess his'n do. I should hate to have mother take up with him."

"What can we do, Sam?"

"Nothin', strenuously. I don't know what 'tis about women-folks in such matters: they won't bear no more meddlin' with than a pa'tridge's nest; you'll spile the brood if you put in a finger. I'd say jest as much as I could about her bein' always welcome here. I'll do my part of that set piece o' music; and that's all we can do. If she's set on havin' him, she will; and you nor me can't stop it, Miss Pratt." With which sound advice, Sam rose from the milking stool with his reconstructed rake, took down a coarse comb from the clock-case, ran it through his hair by way of toilet, and sat down to supper at the table with the three other

hay-makers. Mindwell and her mother were going out to tea, so they did not sup with the men.

After they came home, Sam expressed himself in a succinct but forcible manner to Mrs. Gold on the subject of her marriage, and Mindwell attempted a faint remonstrance again; but her morbid fear of selfishness shut the heart-throbs she longed to express to her mother back into their habitual silence. She and Sam both, trying to do their best, actually helped, rather than hindered, this unpropitious marriage.

Mrs. Gold, in her heart, longed to stay with her children, but feared and disliked so heartily to be a burden on their hands, that she was unjust to herself and them too. A little less self-inspection, and a little more simple honesty of speech, would have settled this matter in favor of Mindwell and Colebrook: as it was, Deacon Flint carried the day. On the Friday following he arrived for his answer; his gray hair tied in a long cue, his Sunday coat of blue, and brass buttons, his tight drab pantaloons, ruffled shirt, and low boots, all indicating a ceremonial occasion.

"Gosh," said old Israel Tucker, jogging along in his yeast-cart, as he met the gray mare in clean harness, whipped up by the deacon in this fine raiment, the old wagon itself being for once washed and greased—"gosh! it's easy tellin' what he's after. I should think them mulleins an' hardhacks in the buryin'-ground would kinder rustle round. I don't know, though; mabbe Miss Flint's realized by now that she's better off under them beauties of natur' than she ever was in Amasy Flint's house. Good land! what fools women-folks be! They don't never know when they're well off. She's had an easy time along back; but she's seen the last on't, she's seen the last on't. Get up, Jewpiter."

Nothing daunted by any mystic or magnetic sense of this vaticination by the highway, Deacon Flint whipped up his bony steed still more, and to such good purpose that he arrived in Colebrook before the widow had taken down the last pinned-up curl on her forehead, or decided which of her two worked collars she would put on, and whether it would be incongruous to wear a brooch of blue enamel with a white center, on which was depicted (in a fine brown tint produced by grinding up in oil a lock of the deceased Ethan Gold's hair) a weeping willow bending over a tomb, with an urn, and a date on the urn. This did seem a little personal on such an occasion: so she pinned on a blue bow instead, and went down to receive the expecting deacon.

"I hope I see you well, ma'am," said Mr. Flint.

"Comfortably well, I'm obleeged to you," was the prim answer.

But the deacon was not to be daunted at this crisis: he plunged valiantly into the middle of things at once. "I suppose you've took into consideration the matter in hand, Miss Gold?"

The widow creased her handkerchief between her finger and thumb, and seemed to be critical about the hemming of it; but she pretty soon said softly, "Yes, I can't say but what I have thought on't a good deal. I've counseled some with the children too."

"Well, I hope you're fit and prepared to acknowledge the leadin' of Providence to this end, and air about ready to be my companion through the valley of this world up to them fields beyond the swellin' flood stands dressed in livin' green. Amen."

The deacon forgot he was not in a prayer meeting, and so dropped into the hymnbook, as Mr. Wegg did into secular poetry.

"H'm, well there's a good deal to be thought of for and ag'inst it too," remarked Mrs. Gold, unwilling to give too easy an assent, and so cheapen herself in the eyes of her acute adorer. But, when her thoughts were sternly sifted down, they appeared to be slight matters; and the deacon soon carried his point. He wasted no time in this transaction. Having "shook hands on it," as he expressed himself, he proceeded at once to arrange the program.

"Well, Sarepty, we're both along in years, and to our time o' life delays is dangerous. I think we'd better get married pretty quick. I'm keepin' that great lazy Polly Morse, and payin' out cash right along; and you no need to fix up any, you've got good clothes enough: besides, what's clothes to worms of the dust sech as we be? The Catechism says 'Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever'; and if that's so—and I expect 'tis so—why, 'tain't nothin' to be concerned about what our poor dyin' bodies is clothed in."

Mrs. Gold did not agree with him at all. She liked her clothes, as women ought to; but his preternatural piety awed her, and she said meekly enough, "Well, I don't need no great of gowns. I sha'n't buy but one, I don't believe."

A faint color stole to her cheek as she said it, for she meant a wedding dress; and Deacon Flint was acute enough to perceive it, and to understand that this was a point he could not carry.

"One gown ain't neither here nor there, Sarepty; but I aim to fix it on your mind, that, as I said afore, delays is dangerous. I purpose, with the divine blessin', to be married this day two weeks. I suppose you're agreeable?" The widow was too surprised to deny this soft impeachment; and he went on, "Ye see, there's papers to be drawn up: you've got independent means, and so have I, and it's jest as well to

settle things fust as last. Did Ethan Gold leave you a life-int'rest in your thirds, or out an' out?"

The widow's lip trembled: her dead husband had been careful of her, more careful than she knew, till now.

"He didn't will me no thirds at all: he left me use an' privilege, for my nateral life, of everything that was his'n, and all to go to Mindwell when I'm gone."

"Do tell! He was forehanded, I declare for't!" exclaimed the deacon, both pleased and displeased; for, if his wife's income was to be greater than he supposed, in case of her death before his there would be no increase to his actual possessions.

"Well, I always calc'lated you had your thirds, an' prob'ly, knowin' Ethan was free-handed, you had 'em out an' out. This makes some difference about what papers I'll have to have drawed up. Now, I guess the best way is to have a agreement like this: I agree not to expect to hev an' to hold none of your property, an' you don't none of mine; but I to have the use of your'n, and you to have your livin' out o' mine. You see, you don't have no more'n your livin' out of your'n now: that's all we any of us get in this here world. 'Hevin' food an' raiment, let us therewith be content,' as Scriptor says. You agree to this, don't ye?"

Bewildered with the plausible phrases ballasted by a text, unaware that even the Devil can quote Scripture to serve his turn, Mrs. Gold did not see that she was putting herself entirely into the hands of this man, and meekly agreed to his arrangement. If this story were not absolutely true, I should scarce dare to invent such a character as Deacon Flint. But he was once a living man, and hesitating to condemn him utterly, being now defenseless among the dead, we can but hope for him and his like that there are purifying fires beyond this life, where he may be melted and refined into the image of Him who made him a man, and gave him a long life here to develop manhood. Not till after he was gone did Mrs. Gold begin to think that he had left her to explain his arrangements to Mindwell and Sam, and instinctively she shrank from doing so. Like many another weak woman, she hated words, particularly hard words. Her life had flowed on in a gentle routine, so peacefully that she had known but one sorrow, and that was so great, that, with the propensity we all have to balance accounts with Providence, she thought her trouble had been all she could bear. But there was yet reserved for her that sharp attrition of life which is so different from the calm and awful force of sorrow—so much more exasperating, so much more educating. Some instinct warned her to avoid remonstrance by concealing from her children the contract she was about to make, and

she felt, too, the uncertainty of a woman unaccustomed to business, about her own clear understanding of the situation. So she satisfied herself with telling Mindwell of the near approach of her marriage.

"O mother, so soon!" was all Mindwell said, though her eyes and lips spoke far more eloquently.

"Well, now the thing's settled, I don't know but what it may as well be over with. We ain't young folks, Mindwell. 'Tain't as if we had quite a spell to live."

Tears stood in her eyes as she said it. A certain misgiving stole over her: just then it seemed a good thing that she could not live long.

Mindwell forced back the sob that choked her. A woman of single heart, she did not consider a second marriage sacred. For herself, she would rather have taken her children to the town farm, cold as corporative charity is, than married another man than Samuel, even if he had been dead thirty years; and she bitterly resented this default of respect to her father's memory. But her filial duty came to the rescue.

"Dear mother, I can't bear to think of it. What shall I do? What will the children say? I did hope you would take time to consider."

"It ain't real dutiful in you to take me to do, Mindwell: I'm full old to be lessoned, seems to me. As for you and the children, I don't feel no great distress: love runs down, not up, folks say; and I don't believe you'll any of ye pine a long spell."

This weak and petulant outburst dismayed Mindwell, who had never seen her mother otherwise than gentle and pleasant; but, with the tact of a great heart, she said nothing, only put her arms about the elder woman's neck, and kissed her over and over. At this, Mrs. Gold began to cry; and, in soothing her distress, Mindwell forgot to ask any further questions, but set herself to divert both their minds from this brief and bitter outburst by inquiring what preparation her mother meant to make in the fortnight.

"I don't look to no great preparation," sighed the widow. "I have always had good clothes enough, and there's a piece of linen I wove before we come here that'll do for all I want. I suppose I had ought to have a new gown to be married in. When I was married to Ethan, I had a white dimity gown and a blue levantine petticoat; and if he didn't fetch me a big bunch of sand-violets—they was blossoming then—for to match my eyes and my skirt, he said. But that's past and gone, as the hymnbook says. I do want to have one good gown, Mindwell; and, now I'm a little along in years, I guess I'll have a dark one. T'other night, when we was up to Squire Barnes's to tea, Miss Barnes was telling about a piece of plum-colored paduasoy Mr. Battle bought in Har'ford for 'Lecty's weddin gown, and she wouldn't hev it. She said 'twasn't

lively enough, and so she's set her mind on a blue levantine. But I should think the plum-color would become me real well."

So the plum-colored silk was bought; and arrayed in its simple folds, with a new worked collar and a white satin bow, the Widow Gold was dressed for her second wedding.

Did she think, as she looked into her oval mirror that morning, what a different vision was this quiet, elderly, sober woman, in decent but not festal garments, from the smiling, blushing, blue-eyed creature in her spotless dimity gown opening over a blue petticoat, and clasped at the throat with a bunch of still bluer violets? What does a woman think who is married the second time? A man is satisfied that now his house will be kept once more, his clothes mended, his whims humored, his table spread to his taste, and his children looked after. If it is needful, he can marry six wives one after the other. They are a domestic necessity: the Lord himself says it is not good for *man* to be alone. But it is quite another thing for the woman. Such a relation is not a movable feast to her: it is once for all; and, if circumstance or pique betray her into this faithlessness, what does she think of herself when it becomes inevitable?

The Widow Gold did not tell. She was paler when she turned from the glass than when she looked into it: and she trembled as she went downstairs to sign the papers before Parson Roberts should arrive.

The best parlor was opened today. The high-backed chairs with old brocade cushions, that had belonged to Sam Pratt's grandmother, were ranged along the wall like a row of stiff ghosts: the corner cupboards were set open to display the old china and glass that filled them; there was a "bow-pot" of great red peonies, abundant and riotous with color and fatness, set under the chimney in the well-whited fireplace; and a few late roses glowed in a blue china jar on the high mantelpiece. On a square table with a leaf lay a legal paper that Sam was reading, with his hands supporting his head as if it was hard to understand the document.

The deacon, in his Sunday garments, was looking at him askance; and Mindwell, with the little girls Ede and Sylvia clinging to her gown, was staring out of the window, down the road—staring, but not seeing; for the splendid summer day that lavished its bloom and verdure and odor on these gaunt New England hills, and hid their rude poverty with its royal mantle, was all a dim blur to the heart-wrung woman.

"Mother," said Sam Pratt, raising his head, "do you know what's the sum and substance of these here papers? and do you agree to't?"

The widow glanced aside at Deacon Flint, and caught his "married eye," early as it was to use that ocular weapon.

"Why, yes, Samwell: I don't know but what I do," she said slowly and rather timidly.

"Well," said Sam, rising, and pushing the paper away, "if you do, why, then you're going right into't, and it's right, I s'pose; but, by Jinks! I think it's the d—"

Mindwell's touch on his arm arrested the sentence. "There's Parson Roberts, Samwell. You jest help him out of the gig, will you? He's quite lame, I see."

Sam Pratt went, with the half-finished sentence on his lips. He was glad his wife had stopped him, on many accounts; but he did long to give Deacon Flint his own opinion of that preliminary contract.

He indulged himself for this deprivation, after the stiff and somewhat melancholy wedding was over, and the staid couple had departed for Bassett in the deacon's wagon, by freeing his mind to his wife.

"Miss Pratt, I was some riled to hev you stop me when I was a-goin' to tell the deacon what I thought about that there contrack; but I don't never stay riled with you, marm, as you'd ought to know by this time." And Sam emphasized this statement with a hearty kiss. "Besides, I will own on second thoughts I was glad you did stop me; for it's no use pinchin' your fingers in a pair o' nippers. But I do say now and here, it was the darndest piece o' swindlin' I ever see—done under a cover of law an' gospel, you may say; for the deacon had stuck in a bit of Scriptor so's to salt it like. He's got the best of the bargain, I tell ye, a long sight. I'm real glad your father went and fixed that prop'ty so she has the use on't only; for she wouldn't have two cents in two years' time, if she'd had it to do with what she's a mind to."

"I am glad he did," said Mindwell. "I have felt as though mother would be better suited if she did have it to do what she liked to with; but if this was to happen, why, it's as good she is provided for. She can't want for nothing now."

"I guess she'll want for more'n money, and mabbe for that too. The paper says she's to have her livin'. Now, that's a wide word. Folks can live on bread and water, I expect; and he can't be holden for no more than he's a mind to give."

"O Sam, you don't think Deacon Flint would grudge her a good living? Why, if he is near, as folks tell he is, he's a professor of religion."

"I'd a durned sight ruther he was a practicer on't, Miss Pratt. Religion's about the best thing there is, and makin' believe it is about the wust. I b'lieve in Amasy Flint's religion jest so far forth as I hear him talk, an' not a inch farther. I know he'll pinch an' shave an' spare to the outside of a cheese-rind; and I haven't no great reason to think he'll do better by Mother Gold than he does by himself." Mindwell turned

away, full of foreboding; and Sam, following her, put his arm about her, and drew her back to the settle.

"Don't worry, dear. She's made her bed, and she's got to lie on't. But, after all, it's the Lord who lets folks do that way, so's to show 'em, I expect, that beds ain't always meant to sleep on, but sometimes to wake folks up. We're kind of apt to lie long an' get lazy on feathers. I expect that's what's the matter with me. I'll get my husks by and by, I guess."

Mindwell looked up at him, with all her heart in her eyes; but she said nothing, and he gave a shy laugh. Their deep love for each other was "a fountain shut up"; and so far no angel had rolled away the stone, and given it visible life. It was still voiceless and sleeping.

Before her wedding day was over, Mrs. Flint's new life began; for Polly Morse had been sent off the night before, being the end of an even week, lest she might charge ninepence for an extra day. So her successor without wages had to lay aside her plum-colored silk, put on a calimanco petticoat and short gown, and proceed to get supper; while Polly, leaning over the half door of the old red house which she shared with the village tailoress, exchanged pungent remarks with old Israel on the topic of the day in Bassett.

"No, they didn't make no weddin', Isr'el. There wa'n't nobody asked, nor no loaf-cake made for her; he wouldn't hear to't, noway. I'd have stayed and fixed up for her today; but he was bound I shouldn't. As for me, I'm most amazin' glad to get hum, now I tell ye. I'd a sight ruther be in Simsbury prison for a spell, if it wa'n't for the name on't."

"Say, Polly, do you call to mind what I said three weeks back about Miss Flint comin' home? Oh! ye do, do ye? Well, I ain't nobody's fool, be I? I guess I can see through a millstone, providin' the hole's big enough, as well as the next man. I'm what ye may call mighty obsarvin', now. I can figger consider'ble well on folks, ef I can't on 'rithmetic; and I know'd jest as well, when I see him rigged up in his sabba'-day go-to-meetin's, and his nose p'inted for Colebrook, what he was up to, as though I heerd him a-askin' her to hev him."

"Well, I never did think Sarepty Gold would demean herself to have him. She's got means and a real good home; and Mindwell sets a sight by her, and so does Sam Pratt: but here she's ben an' gone an' done it. I wouldn't ha' thought it, not if th' angel Gabriel had have told me on't."

"Guess he's in better business than goin' round with Bassett gossip, anyhow. But what was you so took back by? Lordy! I should think you was old enough to git over bein' surprised at women-folks: them and the weather is two things I don't never calc'late on. You can't no more tell what a woman'll do, 'specially about marryin', than you can

tell which way in the road a pig'll go, unless you work it back'ard, same as some folks tell they drive a pig; and then 'tain't reel reliable: they may go right ahead when you don't a mite expect it."

"That is one thing about men, I allow, Isr'el: you can always tell which way they'll go for sartain; and that is after their own advantage, an' nobody else's, now an' forever."

"Amen! They'd be all fools, like me, if they didn't," assented the old man, with a dry chuckle, as he drove off his empty cart. Yet, for all his sneers and sniffs, neither Polly nor the new Mrs. Flint had a truer friend than Israel. Rough as he was, satiric as a chestnut burr that shows all its prickles in open defiance, conscious of a sweet white heart within, his words only were bitter: his nature was generous, kindly, and perceptive. He had become the peripatetic satirist and philosopher that he was out of this very nature,

"Dowered with a scorn of scorn, a love of love,"

and free with the freedom of independent poverty to express pungently what he felt poignantly, being in his own kind and measure the "salt of the earth" to Bassett.

But, in spite of comment and pity, the thing was a fixed fact. Mrs. Flint's married life had begun under new auspices, and it was not a path of roses upon which she had entered. Her housekeeping had always been frugal, with the thrift that is or was characteristic of her race; but it had been abundant for the wants of her family. The viands she provided were those of the place and period, simple and primitive enough; but the great brick oven was well filled with light bread of wheat and rye both; pies of whatever material was in season, whose flaky crust and well-filled interiors testified to her knowledge of the art; deep dishes of baked beans; jars of winter pears; pans of golden-sweet apples; and cards of yellow gingerbread, with rows of snowy and puffy biscuit. Ede and Sylvia knew very well where to find crisp cookies and fat nut-cakes; and pie was reiterated three times a day on Sam Pratt's table.

It was a part of her "pride of life" that she was a good housekeeper; and Mindwell had given her the widest liberty. But now the tide had changed. She soon found that Deacon Flint's parsimony extended into every detail. Her pies were first assailed.

"Sarepty, don't make them pies o' your'n so all-fired rich. They ain't good for the stomach: besides, they use up all the drippin's, and you had ought to make soap next month. Pie is good, and I think it's savin' of meat. But it pompers up the flesh, too good livin' does; and we

hev got to give an account, ye know. I don't mean to have no wicked waste laid to my account."

So she left out half the shortening from her crust, and felt ashamed to see the tough substance this economy produced. Next came the sugar question.

"We buy too much sweetenin', Sarepty. There's a kag of tree-molasses down cellar. I expect it's worked some; but you jest take an' bile it up, an' stir consider'ble saleratus into't, an' it'll do. I want to get along jest as reasonable as we can. Wilful waste makes woful want, ye know."

Yet in his own way the deacon was greedy enough. He had the insatiable appetite that belongs to people of his figure far more often than to the stout.

"He's a real racer," said Uncle Israel, reverting to his own experience in pigs—"slab-sided an' lank. I bet you could count his ribs this minnit; and that's the kind you can feed till the day after never, and they won't do ye no credit. I never see a man could punish vittles the way he can; but there ain't no more fat to him than there is to a hen's forehead."

Mrs. Flint was not "hungry nor hankering," as she expressed it, but a reasonable eater of plain food; but the deacon's mode of procedure was peculiar.

"Say, Sarepty, don't bile but a small piece o' pork with that cabbage today. I've got a pain to my head, an' I don't feel no appetite; an' cold pork gets eat up for supper when there ain't no need on't."

Obeying instructions, the small piece of fat pork would be cooked, and, once at the table, transferred bodily to the deacon's plate. "Seems as though my appetite had reelly come back. I guess 'twas a hungry headache." And the tired woman had to make her dinner from cabbage and potatoes seasoned with the salt and greasy water in which they had been cooked.

There were no amusements for her out of the house. The younger people had their berrying frolics, sleigh rides, kitchen dances, nuttings, and the like; and their elders, their huskings, apple bees, and sewing societies: but against all these the deacon set his hard face.

"It's jest as good to do your own extry chores yourself as to ask folks to come an' help. That costs more'n it comes to. You've got to feed 'em, and like enough keep a big fire up in the spare room. I'd ruther be diligent in business, as Scriptor says, than depend on neighbors."

The sewing society, too, was denied to poor Mrs. Flint, because they had to have tea got for them. Prayer meetings he could not deny her: for they cost nothing, and officially he attended them. Meeting on Sunday was another outlet, when she could see friendly faces, receive

kind greetings, and read in many eyes a sympathy and pity that at once pleased and exasperated her.

Another woman in her place might have had spirit or guile enough to have resisted the pressure under which she only quailed and submitted. She was one of those feeble souls to whom a hard word is like a blow, and who will bear anything and everything rather than be found fault with, and who necessarily become drudges and slaves to those with whom they live, and are despised and ill-treated simply because they are incapable of resentment. There are some persons who stand in this position not so much from want of strength as from abounding and eager affection for those whom they serve; and their suffering, when they discover how vain has been their labor and self-sacrifice, is known only to Him who was

“At once denied, betrayed, and fled
By those who shared his daily bread.”

But Mrs. Flint had no affection for her husband: she married him because it seemed a good thing to do, and obeyed him because he was her husband, as was the custom in those days. So she toiled on dumbly from day to day, half-fed, overworked, desperately lonely, but still uncomplaining; for her constitution was naturally strong, and nerves were unrecognized then.

Her only comfort was the rare visits of her children. Mindwell found it hard to leave home; but, suspicious of her mother's comfort, she made every effort to see her as often as possible, and always to carry her some little present—a dozen fresh eggs, which the poor woman boiled privately, and ate between her scanty meals, a few peaches, or a little loaf of cake—small gifts, merely to demonstrate her feeling. She did not know what good purpose they served, for Mrs. Flint did not tell her daughter what she endured. She remembered too well how Mindwell had begged her to delay and consider her marriage; and she would not own to her now that she had made any mistake: for Mrs. Flint had as much human nature in her composition as the rest of us; and who does like to hear even their dearest friend say, “I told you so”?

Matters went on in this way for five years, every day being a little more weary and dreary than the preceding. The plum-colored paduasoy still did duty as the Sunday gown, for none of her own money ever passed into Mrs. Flint's hands. By this time she understood fully what her ante-nuptial contract meant. She had her living, and no more. People could live without finery, even without warmth. A stuff gown of

coarse linsey-woolsey for winter wear replaced the soft merinos she had always bought for that purpose; and homespun linen check was serviceable in summer, though it kept her busy at flax-wheel and loom many an hour. She had outlived the early forbearances of her married life, and learned to ask, to beg, to persist in entreating, for what she absolutely needed; for only in this way could she get her "living." Her only vivid pleasure was in occasional visits from Ede and Sylvia—lovely little creatures in whom their mother's beauty of character and their father's cheery, genial nature seemed to combine, and with so much of Mindwell's delicate loveliness, her sweet, dark eyes contrasted with the fair hair of their father's family, that to grandmotherly eyes they seemed perfectly beautiful. For them the poor woman schemed and toiled, and grew secretive. She hid a comb of honey sometimes, when the deacon's back was turned, and kept it for Sylvia, who loved honey like a real bee bird; she stored up red pearmain in the parlor closet for Ede; and when Sam Pratt went into Hartford with a load of wool, and brought the children as far as Bassett to stay at Deacon Flint's overnight, the poor woman would make for them gingerbread such as they remembered, and savory cookies that they loved, though she encountered hard looks, and hard words too, for wasting her husband's substance on another man's children.

Ede, who had a ready memory and a fluent tongue, was the first to report to Mindwell these comments of "Grandsir Flint," as they were taught to call him.

"O mother," she exclaimed, "I do think grandsir is real mean!"

"Edy, Edy, you mustn't talk so about your elders and betters."

"I can't help it," chattered on the irrepressible child. "What did he want to come into the kitchen for when granny was giving us supper, and scold because she made cookies for us? Granny 'most cried; and he kept tellin' how he'd said before she shouldn't do it, and he wouldn't have it."

"Don't talk about it, Edy," said her mother, full of grief and indignation.

"Mother, it's true. I heard him too," interposed Sylvia, who thought Ede's word was doubted; for the voluble and outspoken child was a little apt to embellish her reports.

"Well, Sylvy dear, it isn't best to talk about a good many things that are true."

But, for all that, Mindwell did discuss the matter with Sam before she slept, in that "grand committee of two" which is the strength and comfort of a happy marriage.

"Whatever can we do about it, Sam?" she said, with tears in her voice. "I can't bear to keep the children to home—mother sets by 'em like her life; but, if they're going to make trouble between her and Deacon Flint, don't you think I had ought to prevent their going there?"

"Well, it does seem hard on mother every way; but I guess I can fix it. You know we had a heap of wheat off that east lot last year, and I've sent it to mill to be ground up for us. I guess I'll take and send a barrel on't over to mother for a present. The deacon won't mistrust nothing; nor he can't say nothing about her usin' on't for the children."

"That's the very thing," said Mindwell. And so it was, for that small trouble; yet that was only a drop in the bucket. After a few years of real privation, and a worse hunger of spirit, Mrs. Flint's health began to fail. She grew nervous and irritable, and the deacon browbeat her more than ever. Her temper had long since failed under the hourly exasperation of her husband's companionship, and she had become as cross, as peevish, and as exasperating herself as a feeble nature can become under such a pressure.

"I never see nobody so changed as Miss Flint is," confided Aunt Polly to old Israel. "I've always heerd tell that 'flections was sent for folks's good; but her'n don't seem to work that way a mite."

"Well, Polly, I expect there's a reel vital differ'nce in 'flections, jest as there is in folks. She picked her'n up, as you may say, when she married him. 'Twan't reelly the Lord's sendin'. She no need to ha' married him, if she hadn't ben a min' to."

"I sorter thought the Lord sent everything't happened to folks."

"Well, in a manner mabbe he doos. But don't ye rek'lect what David said—how't he'd ruther fall inter the hands of the Lord than inter men's? I expect we're to blame for wilful sins, ain't we? And I guess we fetch 'flections on ourselves sometimes."

"I don't see how you make them idees jibe with 'lection and fore-ordination," rejoined Aunt Polly, who was a zealous theologian, and believed the Saybrook Platform and the Assembly's Catechism to be merely a skillful abridgment and condensation of Scripture.

"I don't know as I'm called to, Polly. I don't believe the Lord's ways is jest like a primer, for everybody to larn right off. I shouldn't have no great respect for a ruler an' governor, as the Confession sez, that wa'n't no bigger'n I was. Land! ef I was to set sail on them seas o' divinity, I should be snooped up in the fust gale, an' drowned right off. I b'lieve He is good, and doos right, anyhow. Ef I can't see the way on't, why, it's 'cause my spiritooal eyes ain't big enough. I can't see into some littler

things than him, and I don't hold to takin' up the sea in a pint cup: 'twon't carry it, nohow." With which aphorism old Israel traveled off with his barrow, leaving Polly amazed and shocked, but perhaps a little wiser after all.

Just about this time a cousin of Deacon Flint's died "over in York State," as he said, and left him guardian of her only daughter, a girl of eighteen. A couple of thousand dollars was all the property that the Widow Eldridge had to give her child; for they had both worked hard for their living after the husband and father left them, and this money was the price of the farm, which had been sold at his death. It was something to get so much cash into his own hands; and the deacon accordingly wrote at once to Mabel, and offered her a home in his house, intimating that the interest of her money not being enough to board and clothe her, he would, out of family affection, supply these necessities for that inadequate sum, if she was willing to help a little about the house. Mabel was friendless enough to grasp eagerly this hope of a home; and very soon the stage stopped at Deacon Flint's door, and a new inmate entered his house.

Mabel Eldridge was a capable, spirited, handsome girl, and, before she had been a week in the Flint family, understood her position, and resolved only to endure it till something better could be found. In her heart she pitied Aunt Flint, as she called her, as much as she detested the deacon; and her fresh girlish heart fairly ached with compassion and indignation over the poor woman. But she was a great comfort and help while she stayed; though she made that stay as short as possible, and utterly refused to give up her savings bankbook to the deacon, who was unable legally to claim it, since her mother left no will, having only asked him, in a letter written just before her death, to act as Mabel's guardian. Her three months' sojourn in the house made her thoroughly aware of Deacon Flint's character and his wife's sufferings. She could not blame Mrs. Flint that she snapped back at the deacon's snarls, or complained long and bitterly of her wants and distresses.

"You don't know nothing what it is, Mabel," she said one day, sobbing bitterly. "I'm put upon so hard! I want for clothes, and for vittles, and for some time to rest, so's't I don't know but what 'twill clean kill me: and, if 'twa'n't for the children, I'd wish to die; but I do cleave to them amazingly."

Indignant tears filled Mab's eyes. "I don't know how you bear it, aunty," she said, putting her arms about the old lady's neck. "Can't you get away from him anyhow?"

"I could, but I suppose I hadn't ought to. There's a house on my farm that ain't goin' to be in use come next April. Hiram Smith—him that's rented it along back—wants some repairin' done on't, and Mr. Flint won't hear to't: so Hi he's been and gone and bought a piece of ground acrost the road, an' put up a buildin' for himself. He's got a long lease of the land; but he don't want the house no more, and he won't pay for't. I s'pose I might move over there for a spell, and have some peace. There's enough old furnitoor there that was father's. But then, agin, I do suppose I haven't no right to leave my husband."

"Haven't you got any right to save your life?" indignantly asked Mabel.

"It ha'n't come to that, not quite," said Mrs. Flint sadly.

But before April she began to think it was a matter of life and death to stay any longer with the man. Mabel had left her some months before, and gone into the family of Sam Pratt's mother, in Colebrook, promising her aunt, that, if ever the time came when she needed her in another home, she would come and take care of her.

Toward the middle of February Mrs. Flint was seized with congestion of the lungs, and was very ill indeed. A fear of public opinion made Deacon Flint send for the doctor; but nothing could induce him to let a nurse enter the house, or even to send for Mindwell Pratt. He was able to do for his wife, he said, and nobody could interfere.

It was the depth of winter; and the communication between Bassett and Colebrook was not frequent in the best weather, neither place being dependent on the other for supplies; and now the roads were blocked with heavy drifts, and the inhabitants of both places had hibernated, as New Englanders must in winter. It was a matter of congratulation with Deacon Flint that he had no outdoor work to do just now, and so was spared the expense of a woman to care for his wife. He could do it, too, more economically than a nurse. It did not matter to him that the gruel was lumpy, or burned, or served without flavoring. Sick folks, particularly with serious sickness, ought not to pamper the flesh: their souls were the things to be considered. He did not want to have Sarepta die, for she had an income that helped him much; but he did not want her to be a "bill of expense," as he phrased it. So while he read the Bible to her twice a day, and prayed to, or rather at, her by the hour, he fed her on sloppy gruel and hard bread, sage tea, and cold toast without butter, and just kept life flickering within her till she could get about and help herself, unknown to him, to draughts of fresh milk, and now and then a raw egg.

But she did not get well: she was feeble, and wasted a long time. The village doctor, knowing what Deacon Flint was, and filled with

pity for his wife, called often, carefully stating that his visits were those of a friend, but urging, also, that Mrs. Flint should have a generous diet, and a glass of wine daily, to restore her strength. The deacon heard him through in silence, and when he left began to growl.

"Well, fools a'n't all dead yet. Wine! I guess not. A good drink o' thoroughwort-tea's wuth all the wine in creation. 'Wine's a mocker, an' strong drink is ragin'.' Dr. Grant don't read his Bible as he'd ought to."

"There ain't nothin' in the Bible aginst beef-tea, I guess," feebly piped his wife. "I do feel as though that would fetch me up. Can't you get a piece o' meat down to the slaughter, deacon?"

"I don't see no need on't, Sarepty: you're doin' reasonable well. Meat is reel costly; an' pomperin' the flesh is sinful. I'll git another codfish next time I go to the store: that's nourishin'. I don't hold to Grant's idees entire. Besides, 'twan't nothin' what he said: he come as a friend."

The poor woman burst into tears. Indignation gave her momentary strength: she did not hear the shed door open behind her; but she rose in her chair like a specter, and looked at him with burning eyes.

"Amasy Flint, I b'lieve you'd a sight rather I'd die than live. I hain't had decent vittles since I was took sick, nor no care whatever. You're a loud pray-er an' reader; but, if 'twan't for the name of it, I b'lieve you'd kill me with the axe instead of starvation. I've a good mind to send for Squire Battle, and swear the peace against ye."

Deacon Flint at this moment saw a shocked face behind his wife's chair: it was Polly Morse. His acuteness came to the rescue. "She's a leetle out," he said, nodding to the unexpected guest. "Come right along, Polly."

This was too much for the weak woman to bear. She fell back, and fainted. Her indignation had overborne her weakness for a moment, but exhausted it also. And, when she awoke to life, Polly was rubbing her, and crying over her; but her husband had gone. Those tears of sympathy were more than she could endure silently. She put her arms round Polly's neck, and, sobbing like a child, poured out the long list of her sorrows into that faithful ear.

"Bless your dear soul!" said Polly, wiping her eyes, "you can't tell me nothing new about him. Didn't I summer an' winter him, so to speak, afore you come here? Don't I know what killed the fust woman? 'Twan't no fever, ef they did call it so. 'Twas livin' with him—want o' food, an' fire, an' lovin'-kindness. Don't tell me. I pitied ye afore ye was married, an' I hain't stopped yit."

But Polly's words were not words only. From that day on, many a cup of broth, vial of currant wine, or bit of hot stewed chicken, found

its way surreptitiously to Mrs. Flint; and her strength of mind and body returned fast, with this sympathy for one, and food for the other. She made up her mind at last that she would leave her husband, at least for a time, and in her own house endeavor to find the peace and rest necessary to her entire recovery. If she could have seen Mindwell and Sam, and taken counsel with them, her course might have been different; but the roads were now well nigh impassable from deep mud, and she could not get to Colebrook, and in sheer desperation she resolved to leave her present home as soon as Hiram Smith moved from the farmhouse. Fortunately for her, the deacon had to attend town meeting, three miles off, on the first Monday in April; and, with Polly and Israel to help her, Mrs. Flint was established in the other house before he returned, and found her flown. His wrath was great but still. He said and did nothing, never went near her, and, for very shame's sake, did not speak of her—for what could he say?

Perhaps in that solitary house, whose silence was like balm to her weary and fevered soul, she might have starved but for the mercy of her neighbors. Polly Morse had a tongue of swiftness, and it never wagged faster than in Mrs. Flint's behalf. Dr. Grant sent half a barrel of flour to that destitute dwelling, and Israel, a bushel of apples. Polly, out of her poverty, shared her kit of pork with the poor woman; and Hiram Smith brought in a barrel of potatoes and a bag of meal, which he duly charged against her account with the farm. But there were many who dared not help her; for the deacon held notes and mortgages on many a house and of many a man in Bassett who could not afford to offend him. And old Parson Roberts was just then shut up with an attack of low fever: so he knew nothing about the matter. However, the deacon was not long to be left nursing his wrath. Food and fire are not enough for life sometimes. The old house was leaky, damp, comfortless; and in a few weeks Mrs. Flint was taken again with disease of the lungs, and Polly Morse found her in her bed, unable to speak loud, her fire gone out, and the rain dripping down in the corner of her bedroom. Polly had come to tell her that Israel was going to Colebrook to buy a pig, and would take any message. She did not tell her, but, stepping to the door, called to him across the yard to tell Sam Pratt he must come over to Bassett directly. This done, she hunted about for something to make a fire, and then looked for the tea; but there was none. Nothing like food remained but a half loaf of bread and some cold potatoes: so she had to break the bread up in some hot water, and feed the exhausted woman slowly, while she chafed her icy feet, and covered her closely with her own shawl. The next day Sam and Mindwell came over, shocked and indignant, their wagon loaded with provisions; and the old house was

soon filled with odors of beef broth, milk-porridge, fragrant tea and toast, and the sharp crackle of a great fire in two rooms; while, best of all, tender hands fed and soothed the poor woman, and soft filial kisses comforted her starved soul.

Mindwell could not stay—there was a little baby at home—but Sam would be left behind while old Israel drove her back to Colebrook, and fetched Mabel Eldridge to take her place.

Mab burst into a passion of tears when she entered the kitchen.

"I knew it!" she sobbed: "I knew that old wretch would kill her!" And it was long before Sam could calm her anger and grief, and bring her in to the invalid.

In the course of two or three weeks, however, Mab's faithful nursing, and Sam's care and providing, brought back life and some strength to the perishing woman. And meanwhile Polly's tongue had wagged well: it flew all over Bassett that Deacon Flint's wife had left him, and almost died of cold and hunger.

Today such a rumor would have had some direct effect on its object; but then to find fault with authorities was little less than a sin, and for a wife to leave her husband, a fearful scandal. In spite of the facts and all their witnesses, the sentiment of Bassett went with the deacon. Conjugal subjection was the fashion, or rather the principle and custom, of the day, and was to be upheld in spite of facts. However, Parson Roberts by this time had heard of the matter, and called Deacon Flint to account, thinking it to be his duty.

"This is the hull sum and substance on't, parson," explained the deacon: "Miss Flint is a miser'ble hystericky female, a dreadful weak vessel, and noways inclined to foller Scriptor in the marriage-relation. I've gin her the same livin' I had myself. I hain't denied her food an' raiment wherewith she had ought to be content, as the 'Postle Poll says. But she is real pernicky, and given to the lusts of the flesh about her eatin'; and I feel it to be my dooty to be a faithful stooard of my substance, and not pomper up our poor perishin' bodies, while there is forty million more or less o' heathen creturs lyin' in wickedness in foreign parts. Ye know, parson, I hain't never stented my contributions to them things: I've ben constant to means of grace allus, and I may say a pillar—mabbe a small and creaky one, but still a pillar—in the temple sech as 'tis. I don't know as I had ought to be disturbed by this strife of tongues."

Parson Roberts was a little confounded. He himself loved a bit of good eating—a cantle of chicken pie, a tender roast pig, a young chicken broiled on hickory coals, or a succulent shad from the Connecticut, washed down with sparkling cider or foaming flip—and the con-

sciousness of this mild weakness gave undue exaltation to Deacon Flint's boasted asceticism. The parson was too honestly humble to see that Deacon Flint loved money with a greed far surpassing that of any epicure; that his own fault was but a failing, while the other was a passion. Besides, he considered that Mrs. Flint had made light of the sacred ordinance of marriage, and set an awful example to the wives of the parish: so he went away from this interview convinced that the deacon was a stern saint, and his wife a weak sinner.

Next day, however, the deacon himself was surprised by another visit. Pale and worn, clinging tight to Sam Pratt's arm, and followed by Mabel carrying a cushion, his wife entered the kitchen, where he sat devouring salt pork and potatoes with the zest of a dog who gnaws his bone unmolested.

"I come back, Amasy, to see if we couldn't agree to get along together agin," she said weakly and meekly. "I hear there's-ben consider'ble talk about my leavin' on ye, and I don't want to cast no reflections. I was tired all out, an' I wanted to rest a spell. Sam an' Mab has nursed me up, so't I could get along now, I guess."

The man turned his cold green-gray eyes on her slowly. "I don't know what you want to come back for now," he said.

"Why, I want for to do my duty so far as I can."

"You had oughter have considered that afore you went off," was the dogged answer.

Tears ran down the poor woman's face: she could not speak. Mabel's beautiful eyes blazed with wrath: she made a step forward; but Sam Pratt gently put her back, and said—

"Look here, Deacon Flint. Mother left you because she hadn't food, nor care, nor nothing she needed, nyther when she was sick, nor when she was gettin' better. She thought a spell o' rest would do her good. She knowed by that smart contrack you got out of her that you owed her a livin' anyhow; and you hain't done a thing to'rds it sence she went to her own house. Now, I don't call that conduct honest, by no means, much less Christian."

"Jedge not, Samwell Pratt. Scriptor, no less'n statoot law, commands a wife to be subjeck to her husband. Sarepty had what I had. I done what I jedged best for her; and, instead of submittin' to her head, she up and went off to live by herself, and lef' me to git along as I could. I wa'n't noway bound by no law nor no contrack to supply her with means, so long as she went away from her dooties, and made me an astonishment an' a hiss'n' in Israel, so to speak."

"Stop right there!" broke in Mabel, furious. "I've heard say the Devil could fetch Scriptor to further his own purposes, and I b'lieve it.

Didn't you have no duties to your wife? Don't the Bible say you've got to love and cherish her? Don't tell me! I lived here long enough to see you starve and browbeat and torment her. I know your mean, hateful, crabbed ways; and I don't know how she lived with you so long. She ought to have run away years ago; and, if folks do hiss at you, it's more'n time they did. Christian!—*you* a Christian! You're a dyed-in-the-wool hypocrite. If you're pious, I hope I shall be a reprobate."

"I ha'n't no doubt but what you will be, young woman," answered the deacon with cold fury. "You'd ought to be put under the pump this minnit, for a common scold. Get out of my house, right off!"

And with this he advanced upon her. But Sam Pratt, lifting the old lady in his arms, carried her away, and gently shoved Mabel, glowing with rage, before them till they reached the wagon. Then he himself went back, and tried to make terms with the deacon. At last, moved by the worldly wisdom of Sam's argument, that it would put him in a bad light before people if he refused to do anything for his wife, he did agree to let her have half of his share of the produce from her farm, if Sam and Mindwell would provide for her other wants. And, making the best of a bad bargain, the poor woman retired to the old house, which Sam had repaired, so that most of it was habitable; and Mabel, who had agreed to teach the district school the next year, took up her abode with her.

Now the deacon had a clear field, and appeared in the arena of Bassett in the character of an injured and forsaken husband. His prayers at meeting were longer and more eloquent than ever; and the church, sympathizing with his sorrows—the male members especially deprecating Mrs. Flint's example, lest it should some time be followed by their own wives—unanimously agreed to withdraw their fellowship from Mrs. Flint—a proceeding in kind, if not in degree, like the anathema of the papacy. The poor old woman quivered under the blow, imparted to her by Parson Roberts, awful in the dignity of his office and a new wig. But the parson was human; and the meek grief of the woman, set off by Mab's blazing indignation, worked upon his honest soul, and caused him to doubt a little the church's wisdom. Mab had followed him across the dooryard to the gate in order to "free her mind."

"I want to know what you wanted that poor woman to do, Parson Roberts. She was dyin' by inches for want of vittles fit to eat, and the care most folks would give a sick ox. Do you think, now, honest, she'd ought to have staid with that old wretch?"

"Speak not evil of dignities, young woman. Amasy Flint is a deacon of Bassett church. It does not become you so to revile him."

This glittering generality did not daunt Mab a moment.

"I don't care if he was deacon in the New Jerusalem, or minister either. If he was the angel Gabriel, and acted the way he did act, I shouldn't have no faith in his piety, nor no patience with his prayers."

Parson Roberts glared at her over his spectacles with pious horror. "What, what, what!" he sternly cried. "Who be you that set in judgment on your elders and betters?"

"I'm one that's seen him where you haven't, anyway, nor your church members. I've lived to his house, and I know him like a book."

Was it possible, the parson thought, that brother Flint might have been in fault—just a little? But he was faithful to his dogmas and his education.

"Do not excuse the woman's sin. She has left her lawful husband, threatened to swear the peace against a Christian man whom she was bound by human and divine law to obey, and caused a scandal and a disturbance in the fold of Christ. Is this a light matter, you daughter of Belial?"

Mab laughed—laughed in the parson's face, in full front of his majestic wig, his awful spectacles, his gold-headed cane uplifted in the heat of argument. He could not see that she was a little hysterical. He grew red with ungodly rage, but Mab did not care a pin.

"You ain't a fool, Parson Roberts," she said undauntedly. "You've got eyes in your head; and you'd know, if you'd use 'em, that Aunt Flint is a weak sister anyway. She wouldn't turn no sooner'n the least worm that ever was; but *they* will turn, if you tread right on 'em. And, whatever you say, you know, jest as well as I do, that Amasy Flint drove her into leavin' him, and drove her with a whip of scorpions, as the Bible tells about."

"Woman, do you mean to say I lie?" thundered the parson.

"Well, yes—if you don't tell the truth," returned Mab, completely at bay now. An audible chuckle betrayed some listener; and the parson, turning round, beheld old Israel silently unloading a wheelbarrow-load of potatoes at the corner of the fence, and wondered in his soul how long the man had been there, but considered it the better part of valor to leave the scene, now that it had ceased to be a *tête-à-tête*: so he waved his hand at Mab with a gloomy scowl, and went his way.

"Land o' liberty!" ejaculated the old man, drawing the back of his hand across his mouth to smother a laugh. "Didn't you give him jesse! I swan you're the gal for a free fight, now. He's heerd the fac's in the case, if he never did afore. Of all things! What be you a-cryin' for now,

eh?" For Mab, a real woman, had flung her apron over her face, and was sobbing violently. Uncle Israel gently tried to pull the cheek screen away; but she held on to it.

"Let me cry," she said. "I ain't sorry: I'm mad, and I've got to cry it out."

"Well," said Israel, returning to his potatoes, and slowly shaking his head. "Women-folks air the beateree. I don't know nothing about 'em, and I'm five an' sixty year old come Friday. Lordy! there ain't no riddles nor Chineee puzzle-rings to compare with 'em. I've hed a wife, an' lost a wife, praise the Lord! but I never was sure o' her even. I wouldn't no more try it agin than I'd slip down into a bee-tree; for there's full as much stings as honey to 'em, and, take an everidge, I guess there's more."

Whether or not the parson's silent ideas coincided with those Israel expressed is not for the ignorant chronicler to say; but it is certain that his candid and generous soul was so far moved by Mab's tirade, however he denied and defied it during its delivery, that the next day he resolved to call in a council of his neighboring brethren to discuss the matter, and indorse or reprobate the action of his own church.

So he wrote to the Rev. Ami Dobbins of Dorset, and the Rev. Samuel Jehoram Hill of Bassington, better known as Father Hill; and, in compliance with his request, they repaired to Bassett, and investigated the matter. Being advised of the pastor, who had had his experiences, they went to Mrs. Flint's during school hours; and Mabel had no chance to pour out her soul before them. They encountered only a pale, depressed, weak woman, who was frightened out of what little heart was left her by past trials, when these two august personages came into her presence, and with severe countenances began their catechism of her life with Deacon Flint. As in the case of many another woman, her terror, her humiliation, and a lingering desire to shield her husband from his own misdeeds, all conspired against her. Her testimony was tearful, confused, and contradictory; though through it all she did feebly insist on her own sufferings, and depicted them in honest colors. From her they went to the deacon, whom they found resigned, pious, and loftily superior to common things; then he was a man, and a deacon! Is it to be wondered at that their letter to the church at Bassett was in the deacon's favor? They did indeed own that Mrs. Flint had "peculiar trials," but went on to say—

"Nevertheless, she cannot be fully justified, but has departed from meekness and a Christian spirit . . . particularly in indulging angry and passionate expressions, tending to provoke and irritate her husband; and, however unjustifiable his conduct may be, that doth not exculpate

her. We think that it would be proper and suitable for her to make suitable reflections, acknowledge she hath given her brethren and sisters of the church occasion of stumbling and to be dissatisfied; and, upon her manifesting a becoming spirit of meekness and love, we think they ought to restore her; but if she should refuse to make such reflections, they cannot consistently receive her."

And with a few added remarks on the perplexity of the case, and advising the church to call the ecclesiastical council, the Rev. Ami Dobbins and Father Hill retired for the present.

But Bassett was not content. Weeks passed, and no act of confession or contrition came from this poor old offender. To tell the truth, Mabel stood behind her now, afire with honest rage at the way she had been put upon.

"You sha'n't do it, aunty!" she said, with all her native vehemence.

"You confess! I like that! It is that old hypocrite's place to confess. He drove you out, now when you get down to it; and he hain't asked you to come back, that I've heard tell. I'd let him and the church, and Bassett too, go to thunder, if they're a mind to. If you make 'suitable reflections,' they'll reflect on old Flint and Bassett church members. Dear me! I know one thing: I'd rather be an old maid ten times over than married to that man."

A faint smile crept over the old woman's pale face. From her high pillows she had a good outlook, and more than once she had seen an interview by the little gate that did not augur long maidenhood for Mab.

"Well, Mabel, if that's your say, why, it behooves you to be real cautious, though I don't know as Sam Pratt's brother could be anyways other than good."

Mab blushed like a Provence rose, but said nothing, yet day after day kept hardening her aunt's heart as well as she knew how; and Parson Roberts, receiving no "reflections" from the offender, and having great faith in Father Hill's power of persuasion, invited him to come again by himself, and hold a conversation with sister Flint on the subject of her trials and her contumacy.

Father Hill was a quaint, gentle, sweet-natured old man, steeped, however, in the prejudices of his time and his faith. He, too, went to the house mailed with his fixed assurance of ecclesiastical dignity and marital supremacy. Sympathy, pity, comprehension of her side of the case, would have disarmed Mrs. Flint completely; she would have sobbed, confessed, laid her hand on her mouth, and her mouth in the dust, and been ready to own herself the chief of sinners: but to be placed in the

wrong from the first, reproved, admonished, and treated as an impenitent and hardened culprit, made it easier for her weak nature to accept the situation than to defy or to deny it. Nothing Father Hill could say moved her, but her dull and feeble obstinacy stirred his tender heart to its depths: he felt a despair of human means and a yearning tenderness that could find no outlet but in prayer. He fell on his knees before the chair in which he had been sitting, and lifted his earnest face to heaven.

"O dear Lord and Master," he said, speaking even as a man unto his friend, "thou hast borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Thou knowest by heart every pain and woe that we feel. A stranger cannot intermeddle, but, O thou Hope of Israel, why shouldst thou be as a stranger that passeth by, and a wayfaring man that tarrieth but a night, in this dwelling of thy handmaid? Dear Lord, it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps, how much less the steps of others! Come thou in the might of thy great gentleness and thine all-knowing sympathy and love, and show this child of thine the right way, saying, 'Walk ye in it.' Thou knowest every sorrow she has passed through, every bitter draught she has drunk, every sin she has been led into: yea, when she said there was no comforter, thine eye pitied and thine arm waited to save her, though the eye of flesh saw it not. Come now, and place beneath her weary heart and failing flesh the everlasting arms of thy overflowing love and care; give her peace and rest; give her an understanding heart; above all, with thy love and pity redeem her, as thou didst the elder Israel, and bring her with tender leading and divine affection, not only into thy fold on earth, but to the general assembly and church of the firstborn in heaven. And to thee shall be praise and love and glory forever. Amen."

When he arose, his old face fair with the shining of the mount from whence he came down, the poor woman, who had dropped her head on her hand, lifted it, and tried to thank him; but streaming tears choked her, and behind the door into the shed a stifled sob betrayed some hidden auditor.

"Farewell!" said Father Hill, and with a look of heavenly benig-nity went out from the house. His deep and earnest piety had got the better of his dogmas; and, so strange is human nature, he was a little ashamed of it. But on his departing steps the shed door opened, and Mab came in, her face all washed with tears.

"*That* man's got religion," she said decisively. "I never heerd a mortal creature pray like that: seemed as though he see right into glory, and talked face to face with the Lord. If that's bein' pious, I wish I was as pious as fury myself."

"He's a good man," sobbed Mrs. Flint; "one of the Lord's an'inted, I make no doubt. And, Mabel, I don't know but what I have did wrong. I ain't noways heavenly minded like him: mabbe I had ought to have put up with everything."

"No, you hadn't: that ain't so. But if it's goin' to make you easier, aunty, to 'make reflections,' as old Parson Roberts says, why, make 'em: only don't tell no lies to the church because you've got into a heavenly mood all to once. Folks that ain't just to themselves don't never get justice elsewheres, now I tell you."

Father Hill, despairing of having impressed Mrs. Flint, had cast the matter into his Master's hands, and from his study in Bassington sent a letter to Parson Roberts, running thus:

REV'D AND DEAR BROTHER, I have had Opportunity with Mrs. Flint, and find that she conceived her leaving the Deacon was a real duty at that time; that her Recovery under Providence turned upon it; that she did not then foresee the Consequences that such a step would issue in her final Separation. . . . She stands ready to reflect upon herself as far as she can be convinced she ought to do so, but thinks the fault is not on her Side as things now are.

I feel unable to direct or advise further. The cause of Religion, the cause of the Christian Church, you are very sensible, is of more Consequence than the Honor or Peace of any individual. If such a settlement can be made as may secure Religion from suffering, it must be an object to be desired. . . . Sensible of the Embarrassments you and the church labor under, and desirous to contribute my mite, I use this Freedom.

This from your affectionate Brother,

Samuel J. Hill.

TO REV'D MR. ROBERTS.

To be communicated if you think expedient.

But, while the ministers were in this strait about their obstinate parishioner, the Lord had answered Father Hill, unknown to himself, while he was yet speaking. Moved, and indeed melted, by the love and sympathy that prayer showed, Mrs. Flint, no longer hindered by Mabel, prepared herself to write "proper reflections" to the church; but in doing so was also perpetually prompted by Mabel not to traitorously deny her own cause, or slip aside from the truth in a voluntary humility; and in due time the following confession was laid before that august body:

I, the subscriber, Sarepta Flint, a member of the church of Christ in Bassett, sensible that the Church are dissatisfied with me on account of the Separation that has taken place between Deacon Flint and myself, and that they are Apprehensive that I have not been innocent as to measures which have led to this unhappy Event, whereby Religion is wounded and the Peace of the Church disturbed, take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge myself a poor, imperfect Creature, and to own that under my Weak state of Body and weakness of mind, with which I was attended at one Time or another, I no doubt manifested on certain Occasions an unsuitable Temper of mind, said and Did things which under other Circumstances I should not have said or done. I am far from justifying myself in all my conduct. Particular I would reflect on myself for that Expression in regard to swearing the Peace against Deacon Flint. . . . I ask the Forgiveness of God and this church, and of all others who are aggrieved, and request the prayers of my Christian Brethren and Sisters that I henceforth conduct as a true and faithful Disciple of Christ, and adorn the Solem Vocation by which I am called.

Sarepta Flint.

P.S. I stand ready also to return to my Husband as soon as a suitable Door opens for that Purpose.

Perhaps something in the self-respecting yet honest humility of this document touched the heart of Bassett church; or perhaps only their self-love and pride of place was soothed by it. Be that as it may, the confession was accepted; and Parson Roberts, with a valor and persistence that did him honor, insisted that Deacon Flint should go with him to inform his wife of her release from interdict, and also to open that "Door" of reconciliation to which she had so pathetically alluded. The parson's wig was fresh buckled, the deacon's cue new wound and tied, and their sabbath-day garments prim and speckless, as the next morning they opened the door of the old house where Sarepta Flint had taken refuge from her oppressor. A scene they little expected met their eyes. On the low bed, covered with its rough blue homespun spread, lay an evidently dying figure. A more "Solem Vocation" than life had called Deacon Flint's wife, and she was about to obey. Mindwell and Sam Pratt upheld her as she gasped for breath, and the two children clung together sobbing at her feet; while Mabel, with Joe Pratt's arm about her, and her face streaming with tears she did not feel, stood by the bedside gazing at her friend. Her face blazed as the deacon and Parson Roberts entered; but, roused by the click of the latch, Mrs. Flint opened

her eyes, and looked at the youthful pair with a gentle smile. They had been the one bright outlook of her latter life, and to them she gave her last smile; for, as her eyes turned toward her husband, a cold terror filled them, the lids fell, her head drooped on Mindwell's shoulder, and with one long, shuddering sigh she escaped forever. The forgiveness of the church and the condescension of her husband came too late: she was already safe where the wicked cease from troubling, and the Consoler dries all mortal tears.

Deacon Flint stood like a stone. Did remorse trouble him? Was regret busy at his heart? Or did he feel a bitter and deep chagrin at the loss of so much income?

Mabel's tears ceased: she withdrew from Joe's arm, and went round to where Deacon Flint stood. "Are you proper pleased now?" she said in a low voice of concentrated contempt and rage. "You've got her turned out of church, and into heaven. You won't never see her again—no, never! not to all eternity. But you've killed her as good as if you took an axe to her. You can take that hum to sleep on."

"Hush!" said Parson Roberts, with all the dignity a little man could give to his voice and manner. "When the Lord giveth quietness, who, then, can make trouble?"

But even as he spoke, Joe Pratt—his face full of black wrath—set his hand to the deacon's collar, and walked him summarily into the road. Mabel had spoken truth: never again did he see his wife's face, not even in the fair peace of death. Whether ever, in that far world of souls, they met again, is perhaps doubtful: let us pray not. Mrs. Flint's married experience was over in this world a hundred years ago, and in the next "they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

The Yellow Wallpaper



CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN



IT IS VERY SELDOM that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer. A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity—but that would be asking too much of fate! Still I will proudly declare that there is something queer about it.

Else, why should it be let so cheaply? And why have stood so long untenanted?

John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage.

John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures.

John is a physician, and *perhaps*—(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)—*perhaps* that is one reason I do not get well faster.

You see he does not believe I am sick!

And what can one do?

If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing.

So I take phosphates or phosphites—whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to “work” until I am well again.

Personally, I disagree with their ideas.

Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good.

But what is one to do?

I did write for a while in spite of them; but it *does* exhaust me a good deal—having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition.

I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus—but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad.

So I will let it alone and talk about the house.

The most beautiful place! It is quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. It makes me think of English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people.

There is a *delicious* garden! I never saw such a garden—large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them.

There were greenhouses, too, but they are all broken now.

There was some legal trouble, I believe, something about the heirs and coheirs; anyhow, the place has been empty for years.

That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid, but I don’t care—there is something strange about the house—I can feel it.

I even said so to John one moonlight evening, but he said what I felt was a *draft*, and shut the window.

I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I’m sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition.

But John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself—before him, at least, and that makes me very tired.

I don’t like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it.

He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.

He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction.

I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more.

He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest and all the air I could get. "Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear," said he, "and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all the time." So we took the nursery at the top of the house.

It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls.

The paint and paper look as if a boys' school had used it. It is stripped off—the paper—in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life.

One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin.

It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard-of contradictions.

The color is repellent, almost revolting; a smoldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.

It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others.

No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long.

There comes John, and I must put this away—he hates to have me write a word.

We have been here two weeks, and I haven't felt like writing before, since that first day.

I am sitting by the window now, up in this atrocious nursery, and there is nothing to hinder my writing as much as I please, save lack of strength.

John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious.

I am glad my case is not serious!

But these nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing.

John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no *reason* to suffer, and that satisfies him.

Of course it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way!

I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!

Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able—to dress and entertain, and order things.

It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby!

And yet I *cannot* be with him, it makes me so nervous.

I suppose John never was nervous in his life. He laughs at me so about this wallpaper!

At first he meant to repaper the room, but afterward he said that I was letting it get the better of me, and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies.

He said that after the wallpaper was changed it would be the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then the gate at the head of the stairs, and so on.

"You know the place is doing you good," he said, "and really, dear, I don't care to renovate the house just for a three months' rental."

"Then do let us go downstairs," I said, "there are such pretty rooms there."

Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose, and said he would go down to the cellar, if I wished, and have it whitewashed into the bargain.

But he is right enough about the beds and windows and things.

It is an airy and comfortable room as anyone need wish, and, of course, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim.

I'm really getting quite fond of the big room, all but that horrid paper.

Out of one window I can see the garden, those mysterious deep-shaded arbors, the riotous old-fashioned flowers, and bushes and gnarly trees.

Out of another I get a lovely view of the bay and a little private wharf belonging to the estate. There is a beautiful shaded lane that runs down there from the house. I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try.

I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me.

But I find I get pretty tired when I try.

It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work. When I get really well, John says we will ask Cousin Henry and Julia down for a long visit; but he says he would as soon put fireworks in my pillowcase as to let me have those stimulating people about now.

I wish I could get well faster.

But I must not think about that. This paper looks to me as if it *knew* what a vicious influence it had!

There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside-down.

I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where two breadths didn't match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other.

I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy store.

I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big, old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend.

I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hop into that chair and be safe.

The furniture in this room is no worse than inharmonious, however, for we had to bring it all from downstairs. I suppose when this was used as a playroom they had to take the nursery things out, and no wonder! I never saw such ravages as the children have made here.

The wallpaper, as I said before, is torn off in spots, and it sticketh closer than a brother—they must have had perseverance as well as hatred.

Then the floor is scratched and gouged and splintered, the plaster itself is dug out here and there, and this great heavy bed which is all we found in the room, looks as if it had been through the wars.

But I don't mind it a bit—only the paper.

There comes John's sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing.

She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no

better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick!

But I can write when she is out, and see her a long way off from these windows.

There is one that commands the road, a lovely shaded winding road, and one that just looks off over the country. A lovely country, too, full of great elms and velvet meadows.

This wallpaper has a kind of subpattern in a different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then.

But in the places where it isn't faded and where the sun is just so—I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design.

There's sister on the stairs!

Well, the Fourth of July is over! The people are all gone and I am tired out. John thought it might do me good to see a little company, so we just had mother and Nellie and the children down for a week.

Of course I didn't do a thing. Jennie sees to everything now.

But it tired me all the same.

John says if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall.

But I don't want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so!

Besides, it is such an undertaking to go so far.

I don't feel as if it was worthwhile to turn my hand over for anything, and I'm getting dreadfully fretful and querulous.

I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time.

Of course I don't when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone.

And I am alone a good deal just now. John is kept in town very often by serious cases, and Jennie is good and lets me alone when I want her to.

So I walk a little in the garden or down that lovely lane, sit on the porch under the roses, and lie down up here a good deal.

I'm getting really fond of the room in spite of the wallpaper. Perhaps *because* of the wallpaper.

It dwells in my mind so!

I lie here on this great immovable bed—it is nailed down, I believe—and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as

gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we'll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I *will* follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion.

I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of.

It is repeated, of course, by the breadths, but not otherwise.

Looked at in one way each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes—a kind of “debased Romanesque” with *delirium tremens*—go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity.

But, on the other hand, they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase.

The whole thing goes horizontally, too, at least it seems so, and I exhaust myself in trying to distinguish the order of its going in that direction.

They have used a horizontal breadth for a frieze, and that adds wonderfully to the confusion.

There is one end of the room where it is almost intact, and there, when the crosslights fade and the low sun shines directly upon it, I can almost fancy radiation after all—the interminable grotesques seem to form around a common center and rush off in headlong plunges of equal distraction.

It makes me tired to follow it. I will take a nap I guess.

I don't know why I should write this.

I don't want to.

I don't feel able.

And I know John would think it absurd. But I *must* say what I feel and think in some way—it is such a relief!

But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief.

Half the time now I am awfully lazy, and lie down ever so much.

John says I mustn't lose my strength, and has me take cod liver oil and lots of tonics and things, to say nothing of ale and wine and rare meat.

Dear John! He loves me very dearly, and hates to have me sick. I tried to have a real earnest reasonable talk with him the other day, and tell him how I wish he would let me go and make a visit to Cousin Henry and Julia.

But he said I wasn't able to go, nor able to stand it after I got there; and I did not make out a very good case for myself, for I was crying before I had finished.

It is getting to be a great effort for me to think straight. Just this nervous weakness I suppose.

And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sat by me and read to me till it tired my head.

He said I was his darling and his comfort and all he had, and that I must take care of myself for his sake, and keep well.

He says no one but myself can help me out of it, that I must use my will and self-control and not let any silly fancies run away with me.

There's one comfort, the baby is well and happy, and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wallpaper.

If we had not used it, that blessed child would have! What a fortunate escape! Why, I wouldn't have a child of mine, an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds.

I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all; I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see.

Of course I never mention it to them anymore—I am too wise—but I keep watch of it all the same.

There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will.

Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.

It is always the same shape, only very numerous.

And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder—I begin to think—I wish John would take me away from here!

It is so hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so.

But I tried it last night.

It was moonlight. The moon shines in all around just as the sun does.

I hate to see it sometimes, it creeps so slowly, and always comes in by one window or another.

John was asleep and I hated to waken him, so I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wallpaper till I felt creepy.

The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.

I got up softly and went to feel and see if the paper *did* move, and when I came back John was awake.

"What is it, little girl?" he said. "Don't go walking about like that—you'll get cold."

I thought it was a good time to talk, so I told him that I really was not gaining here, and that I wished he would take me away.

"Why darling!" said he, "our lease will be up in three weeks, and I can't see how to leave before."

"The repairs are not done at home, and I cannot possibly leave town just now. Of course if you were in any danger, I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you."

"I don't weigh a bit more," said I, "nor as much; and my appetite may be better in the evening when you are here, but it is worse in the morning when you are away!"

"Bless her little heart!" said he with a big hug, "she shall be as sick as she pleases! But now let's improve the shining hours by going to sleep, and talk about it in the morning!"

"And you won't go away?" I asked gloomily.

"Why, how can I, dear? It is only three weeks more and then we will take a nice little trip of a few days while Jennie is getting the house ready. Really dear you are better!"

"Better in body perhaps—" I began, and stopped short, for he sat up straight and looked at me with such a stern, reproachful look that I could not say another word.

"My darling," said he, "I beg of you, for my sake and for our child's sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter your mind! There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so?"

So of course I said no more on that score, and we went to sleep before long. He thought I was asleep first, but I wasn't, and lay there for hours trying to decide whether that front pattern and the back pattern really did move together or separately.

On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind.

The color is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing.

You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well under way in following, it turns a back somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream.

The outside pattern is a florid arabesque, reminding one of a fungus. If you can imagine a toadstool in joints, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions—why, that is something like it.

That is, sometimes!

There is one marked peculiarity about this paper, a thing nobody seems to notice but myself, and that is that it changes as the light changes.

When the sun shoots in through the east window—I always watch for that first long, straight ray—it changes so quickly that I never can quite believe it.

That is why I watch it always.

By moonlight—the moon shines in all night when there is a moon—I wouldn't know it was the same paper.

At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.

I didn't realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind, that dim subpattern, but now I am quite sure it is a woman.

By daylight she is subdued, quiet. I fancy it is the pattern that keeps her so still. It is so puzzling. It keeps me quiet by the hour.

I lie down ever so much now. John says it is good for me, and to sleep all I can.

Indeed he started the habit by making me lie down for an hour after each meal.

It is a very bad habit I am convinced, for you see I don't sleep.

And that cultivates deceit, for I don't tell them I'm awake—O no!

The fact is I am getting a little afraid of John.

He seems very queer sometimes, and even Jennie has an inexplicable look.

It strikes me occasionally, just as a scientific hypothesis—that perhaps it is the paper!

I have watched John when he did not know I was looking, and come into the room suddenly on the most innocent excuses, and I've caught him several times *looking at the paper!* And Jennie too. I caught Jennie with her hand on it once.

She didn't know I was in the room, and when I asked her in a quiet, a very quiet voice, with the most restrained manner possible, what she was doing with the paper—she turned around as if she had been caught stealing, and looked quite angry—asked me why I should frighten her so!

Then she said that the paper stained everything it touched, that she had found yellow smooches on all my clothes and John's, and she wished we would be more careful!

Did not that sound innocent? But I know she was studying that pattern, and I am determined that nobody shall find it out but myself!

Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see I have something more to expect, to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better, and am more quiet than I was.

John is so pleased to see me improve! He laughed a little the other day, and said I seemed to be flourishing in spite of my wallpaper.

I turned it off with a laugh. I had no intention of telling him it was *because* of the wallpaper—he would make fun of me. He might even want to take me away.

I don't want to leave now until I have found it out. There is a week more, and I think that will be enough.

I'm feeling ever so much better! I don't sleep much at night, for it is so interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal in the daytime.

In the daytime it is tiresome and perplexing.

There are always new shoots on the fungus, and new shades of yellow all over it. I cannot keep count of them, though I have tried conscientiously.

It is the strangest yellow, that wallpaper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw—not beautiful ones like buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things.

But there is something else about that paper—the smell! I noticed it the moment we came into the room, but with so much air and sun it was not bad. Now we have had a week of fog and rain, and whether the windows are open or not, the smell is here.

It creeps all over the house.

I find it hovering in the dining room, skulking in the parlor, hiding in the hall, lying in wait for me on the stairs.

It gets into my hair.

Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it—there is that smell!

Such a peculiar odor, too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like.

It is not bad—at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met.

In this damp weather it is awful; I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me.

It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house—to reach the smell.

But now I am used to it. The only thing I can think of that it is like is the *color* of the paper! A yellow smell.

There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mopboard. A streak that runs round the room. It goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even *smooch*, as if it had been rubbed over and over.

I wonder how it was done and who did it, and what they did it for. Round and round and round—round and round and round—it makes me dizzy!

I really have discovered something at last.

Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out.

The front pattern *does* move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it!

Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over.

Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard.

And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern—it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads.

They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down, and makes their eyes white!

If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be half so bad.

I think that woman gets out in the daytime!

And I'll tell you why—privately—I've seen her!

I can see her out of every one of my windows!

It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight.

I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes she hides under the blackberry vines.

I don't blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight!

I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once.

And John is so queer now, that I don't want to irritate him. I wish he would take another room! Besides, I don't want anybody to get that woman out at night but myself.

I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows at once.

But, turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of one at one time.

And though I always see her, she *may* be able to creep faster than I can turn!

I have watched her sometimes away off in the open country, creeping as fast as a cloud shadow in a high wind.

If only that top pattern could be gotten off from the under one! I mean to try it, little by little.

I have found out another funny thing, but I shan't tell it this time! It does not do to trust people too much.

There are only two more days to get this paper off, and I believe John is beginning to notice. I don't like the look in his eyes.

And I heard him ask Jennie a lot of professional questions about me. She had a very good report to give.

She said I slept a good deal in the daytime.

John knows I don't sleep very well at night, for all I'm so quiet!

He asked me all sorts of questions, too, and pretended to be very loving and kind.

As if I couldn't see through him!

Still, I don't wonder he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months.

It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jennie are secretly affected by it.

Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. John to stay in town overnight, and won't be out until this evening.

Jennie wanted to sleep with me—the sly thing! but I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for a night all alone.

That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.

I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper.

A strip about as high as my head and half around the room.

And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me, I declared I would finish it today!

We go away tomorrow, and they are moving all my furniture down again to leave things as they were before.

Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it out of pure spite at the vicious thing.

She laughed and said she wouldn't mind doing it herself, but I must not get tired.

How she betrayed herself that time!

But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me—not *alive!*

She tried to get me out of the room—it was too patent! But I said it was so quiet and empty and clean now that I believed I would lie down again and sleep all I could; and not to wake me even for dinner—I would call when I woke.

So now she is gone, and the servants are gone, and the things are gone, and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we found on it.

We shall sleep downstairs tonight, and take the boat home tomorrow.

I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again.

How those children did tear about here!

This bedstead is fairly gnawed!

But I must get to work.

I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path.

I don't want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes.

I want to astonish him.

I've got a rope up here that even Jennie did not find. If that woman does get out, and tries to get away, I can tie her!

But I forgot I could not reach far without anything to stand on!

This bed will *not* move!

I tried to lift and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little piece at one corner—but it hurt my teeth.

Then I peeled off all the paper I could reach standing on the floor. It sticks horribly and the pattern just enjoys it! All those strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths just shriek with derision!

I am getting angry enough to do something desperate. To jump out of the window would be admirable exercise, but the bars are too strong even to try.

Besides I wouldn't do it. Of course not. I know well enough that a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued.

I don't like to *look* out of the windows even—there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast.

I wonder if they all come out of that wallpaper as I did?

But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope—you don't get *me* out in the road there!

I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard!

It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please!

I don't want to go outside. I won't, even if Jennie asks me to.

For outside you have to creep on the ground, and everything is green instead of yellow.

But here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way.

Why there's John at the door!

It is no use, young man, you can't open it!

How he does call and pound!

Now he's crying for an axe.

It would be a shame to break down that beautiful door!

"John dear!" said I in the gentlest voice, "the key is down by the front steps, under a plantain leaf!"

That silenced him for a few moments.

Then he said—very quietly indeed, "Open the door, my darling!"

"I can't," said I. "The key is down by the front door under a plantain leaf!"

And then I said it again, several times, very gently and slowly, and said it so often that he had to go and see, and he got it of course, and came in. He stopped short by the door.

"What is the matter?" he cried. "For God's sake, what are you doing!"

I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder.

"I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!"

Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!

The Quadroons



LYDIA MARIA CHILD

"I promised thee a sister tale
Of man's perfidious cruelty;
Come then and hear what cruel wrong
Befell the dark Ladie."

COLERIDGE



NOT FAR FROM AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, there is a pleasant place called Sand-Hills, appropriated almost exclusively to summer residences for the wealthy inhabitants of the neighboring city. Among the beautiful cottages that adorn it was one far retired from the public roads, and almost hidden among the trees. It was a perfect model of rural beauty. The piazzas that surrounded it were covered with Clematis and Passion flower. The Pride of China mixed its oriental-looking foliage with the majestic magnolia, and the air was redolent with the fragrance of flowers, peeping out from every nook, and nodding upon you in bye places with a most unexpected welcome. The tasteful hand of Art had not learned to *imitate* the lavish beauty and harmonious disorder of Nature, but they lived together in loving unity, and spoke in according tones. The gateway rose in a Gothic arch, with graceful tracery in ironwork, surmounted by a Cross, around which fluttered and played the Mountain Fringe, that lightest and most fragile of vines.

The inhabitants of this cottage remained in it all the year round; and perhaps enjoyed most the season that left them without neighbors. To one of the parties, indeed, the fashionable summer residents, that came and went with the butterflies, were merely neighbors-in-law. The edicts of society had built up a wall of separation between her and them; for she was a quadroon: the daughter of a wealthy merchant of New Orleans, highly cultivated in mind and manners, graceful as an antelope, and beautiful as the evening star. She had early attracted the attention of a handsome and wealthy young Georgian; and as their acquaintance increased, the purity and bright intelligence of her mind inspired him with a far deeper sentiment than belongs merely to excited passion. It was in fact Love in its best sense—that most perfect landscape of our complex nature, where earth everywhere kisses the sky, but the heavens embrace all; and the lowliest dewdrop reflects the image of the highest star.

The tenderness of Rosalie's conscience required an outward form of marriage; though she well knew that a union with her proscribed race was unrecognized by law, and therefore the ceremony gave her no legal hold on Edward's constancy. But her high, poetic nature regarded the reality rather than the semblance of things; and when he playfully asked how she could keep him if he wished to run away, she replied, "Let the church that my mother loved sanction our union, and my own soul will be satisfied, without the protection of the state. If your affections fall from me, I would not, if I could, hold you by a legal fetter."

It was a marriage sanctioned by Heaven, though unrecognized on earth. The picturesque cottage at Sand-Hills was built for the young bride under her own directions; and there they passed ten as happy years as ever blessed the heart of mortals. It was Edward's fancy to name their eldest child Xarifa; in commemoration of a Spanish song, which had first conveyed to his ears the sweet tones of her mother's voice. Her flexile form and nimble motions were in harmony with the breezy sound of the name; and its Moorish origin was most appropriate to one so emphatically "a child of the sun." Her complexion, of a still lighter brown than Rosalie's, was rich and glowing as an autumnal leaf. The iris of her large, dark eye had the melting, mezzotinto outline, which remains the last vestige of African ancestry, and gives that plaintive expression, so often observed, and so appropriate to that docile and injured race.

Xarifa learned no lessons of humility or shame, within her own happy home; for she grew up in the warm atmosphere of father's and mother's love, like a flower open to the sunshine, and sheltered from the winds. But in summer walks with her beautiful mother, her young cheek often mantled at the rude gaze of the young men, and her dark

eye flashed fire, when some contemptuous epithet met her ear, as white ladies passed them by, in scornful pride and ill-concealed envy.

Happy as Rosalie was in Edward's love, and surrounded by an outward environment of beauty, so well adapted to her poetic spirit, she felt these incidents with inexpressible pain. For herself, she cared but little; for she had found a sheltered home in Edward's heart, which the world might ridicule, but had no power to profane. But when she looked at her beloved Xarifa, and reflected upon the unavoidable and dangerous position which the tyranny of society had awarded her, her soul was filled with anguish. The rare loveliness of the child increased daily, and was evidently ripening into most marvelous beauty. The father rejoiced in it with unmingled pride; but in the deep tenderness of the mother's eye there was an indwelling sadness, that spoke of anxious thoughts and fearful foreboding.

When Xarifa entered her ninth year, these uneasy feelings found utterance in earnest solicitations that Edward would remove to France, or England. This request excited but little opposition, and was so attractive to his imagination, that he might have overcome all intervening obstacles, had not "a change come o'er the spirit of his dream." He still loved Rosalie; but he was now twenty-eight years old, and, unconsciously to himself, ambition had for some time been slowly gaining an ascendancy over his other feelings. The contagion of example had led him into the arena where so much American strength is wasted; he had thrown himself into political excitement, with all the honest fervor of youthful feeling. His motives had been unmixed with selfishness, nor could he ever define to himself when or how sincere patriotism took the form of personal ambition. But so it was, that at twenty-eight years old, he found himself an ambitious man, involved in movements which his frank nature would have once abhorred, and watching the doubtful game of mutual cunning with all the fierce excitement of a gambler.

Among those on whom his political success most depended was a very popular and wealthy man, who had an only daughter. His visits to the house were at first of a purely political nature; but the young lady was pleasing, and he fancied he discovered in her a sort of timid preference for himself. This excited his vanity, and awakened thoughts of the great worldly advantages connected with a union. Reminiscences of his first love kept these vague ideas in check for several months; but Rosalie's image at last became an unwelcome intruder; for with it was associated the idea of restraint. Moreover Charlotte, though inferior in beauty, was yet a pretty contrast to her rival. Her light hair fell in silken profusion, her blue eyes were gentle, though inexpressive, and her healthy cheeks were like opening rosebuds.

He had already become accustomed to the dangerous experiment of resisting his own inward convictions; and this new impulse to ambition, combined with the strong temptation of variety in love, met the ardent young man weakened in moral principle, and unfettered by laws of the land. The change wrought upon him was soon noticed by Rosalie.

“In many ways does the full heart reveal
The presence of the love it would conceal;
But in far more the estranged heart lets know
The absence of the love, which yet it fain would show.”

At length the news of his approaching marriage met her ear. Her head grew dizzy, and her heart fainted within her; but, with a strong effort at composure, she inquired all the particulars; and her pure mind at once took its resolution. Edward came that evening, and though she would have fain met him as usual, her heart was too full not to throw a deep sadness over her looks and tones. She had never complained of his decreasing tenderness, or of her own lonely hours; but he felt that the mute appeal of her heartbroken looks was more terrible than words. He kissed the hand she offered, and with a countenance almost as sad as her own, led her to a window in the recess shadowed by a luxuriant Passion Flower. It was the same seat where they had spent the first evening in this beautiful cottage, consecrated to their youthful loves. The same calm, clear moonlight looked in through the trellis. The vine then planted had now a luxuriant growth; and many a time had Edward fondly twined its sacred blossoms with the glossy ringlets of her raven hair. The rush of memory almost overpowered poor Rosalie; and Edward felt too much oppressed and ashamed to break the long, deep silence. At length, in words scarcely audible, Rosalie said, “Tell me, dear Edward, are you to be married next week?” He dropped her hand, as if a rifle-ball had struck him; and it was not until after long hesitation, that he began to make some reply about the necessity of circumstances. Mildly, but earnestly, the poor girl begged him to spare apologies. It was enough that he no longer loved her, and that they must bid farewell. Trusting to the yielding tenderness of her character, he ventured, in the most soothing accents, to suggest that as he still loved her better than all the world, she would ever be his real wife, and they might see each other frequently. He was not prepared for the storm of indignant emotion his words excited. Hers was a passion too absorbing to admit of partnership; and her spirit was too pure to form a selfish league with crime.

At length this painful interview came to an end. They stood together by the Gothic gate, where they had so often met and parted in the moonlight. Old remembrances melted their souls. "Farewell, dearest Edward," said Rosalie. "Give me a parting kiss." Her voice was choked for utterance, and the tears flowed freely, as she bent her lips toward him. He folded her convulsively in his arms, and imprinted a long, impassioned kiss on that mouth, which had never spoken to him but in love and blessing.

With effort like a death pang, she at length raised her head from his heaving bosom and turning from him with bitter sobs, she said, "It is our *last*. To meet thus is henceforth crime. God bless you. I would not have you so miserable as I am. Farewell. A *last* farewell." "The *last*!" exclaimed he, with a wild shriek. "Oh God, Rosalie, do not say that!" and covering his face with his hands, he wept like a child.

Recovering from his emotion, he found himself alone. The moon looked down upon him mild, but very sorrowful; as the Madonna seems to gaze on her worshiping children, bowed down with consciousness of sin. At that moment he would have given worlds to have disengaged himself from Charlotte; but he had gone so far, that blame, disgrace, and duels with angry relatives, would now attend any effort to obtain his freedom. Oh, how the moonlight oppressed him with its friendly sadness! It was like the plaintive eye of his forsaken one—like the music of sorrow echoed from an unseen world.

Long and earnestly he gazed at that dwelling, where he had so long known earth's purest foretaste of heavenly bliss. Slowly he walked away; then turned again to look on that charmed spot, the nestling place of his young affections. He caught a glimpse of Rosalie, weeping beside a magnolia, which commanded a long view of the path leading to the public road. He would have sprung toward her, but she darted from him, and entered the cottage. That graceful figure, weeping in the moonlight, haunted him for years. It stood before his closing eyes, and greeted him with the morning dawn.

Poor Charlotte! had she known all, what a dreary lot would hers have been; but fortunately, she could not miss the impassioned tenderness she had never experienced; and Edward was the more careful in his kindness, because he was deficient in love. Once or twice she heard him murmur, "dear Rosalie," in his sleep; but the playful charge she brought was playfully answered, and the incident gave her no real uneasiness. The summer after their marriage, she proposed a residence at Sand-Hills; little aware what a whirlwind of emotion she excited in her husband's heart. The reasons he gave for rejecting the proposition appeared satisfactory; but she could not quite understand why he was

never willing that their afternoon drives should be in the direction of those pleasant rural residences, which she had heard him praise so much. One day, as their barouche rolled along a winding road that skirted Sand-Hills, her attention was suddenly attracted by two figures among the trees by the wayside; and touching Edward's arm, she exclaimed, "Do look at that beautiful child!" He turned, and saw Rosalie and Xarifa. His lips quivered, and his face became deadly pale. His young wife looked at him intently, but said nothing. There were points of resemblance in the child, that seemed to account for his sudden emotion. Suspicion was awakened, and she soon learned that the mother of that lovely girl bore the name of Rosalie; with this information came recollections of the "dear Rosalie," murmured in uneasy slumbers. From gossiping tongues she soon learned more than she wished to know. She wept, but not as poor Rosalie had done, for she never had loved, and been beloved, like her; and her nature was more proud. Henceforth a change came over her feelings and her manners; and Edward had no further occasion to assume a tenderness in return for hers. Changed as he was by ambition, he felt the wintry chill of her polite propriety, and sometimes in agony of heart, compared it with the gushing love of her who was indeed his wife.

But these, and all his emotions, were a sealed book to Rosalie, of which she could only guess the contents. With remittances for her and her child's support, there sometimes came earnest pleadings that she would consent to see him again; but these she never answered, though her heart yearned to do so. She pitied his fair young bride, and would not be tempted to bring sorrow into her household by any fault of hers. Her earnest prayer was that she might never know of her existence. She had not looked on Edward since she watched him under the shadow of the magnolia, until his barouche passed her in her rambles some months after. She saw the deadly paleness of his countenance, and had he dared to look back, he would have seen her tottering with faintness. Xarifa brought water from a little rivulet, and sprinkled her face. When she revived, she clasped the beloved child to her heart with a vehemence that made her scream. Soothingly she kissed away her fears, and gazed into her beautiful eyes with a deep, deep sadness of expression, which Xarifa never forgot. Wild were the thoughts that pressed around her aching heart, and almost maddened her poor brain; thoughts which had almost driven her to suicide the night of that last farewell. For her child's sake she conquered the fierce temptation then; and for her sake, she struggled with it now. But the gloomy atmosphere of their once happy home overclouded the morning of Xarifa's life.

“She from her mother learnt the trick of grief,
And sighed among her playthings.”

Rosalie perceived this; and it gave her gentle heart unutterable pain. At last, the conflicts of her spirit proved too strong for the beautiful frame in which it dwelt. About a year after Edward's marriage, she was found dead in her bed, one bright autumnal morning. She had often expressed to her daughter a wish to be buried under a spreading oak, that shaded a rustic garden chair, in which she and Edward had spent many happy evenings. And there she was buried; with a small white cross at her head, twined with the cypress vine. Edward came to the funeral, and wept long, very long, at the grave. Hours after midnight, he sat in the recess window, with Xarifa folded to his heart. The poor child sobbed herself to sleep on his bosom; and the convicted murderer had small reason to envy that wretched man, as he gazed on the lovely countenance, that so strongly reminded him of his early and his only love.

From that time, Xarifa was the central point of all his warmest affections. He employed an excellent old negress to take charge of the cottage, from which he promised his darling child that she should never be removed. He employed a music master, and dancing master, to attend upon her; and a week never passed without a visit from him, and a present of books, pictures, or flowers. To hear her play upon the harp, or repeat some favorite poem in her mother's earnest accents and melodious tones, or to see her flexile figure float in the garland dance, seemed to be the highest enjoyment of his life. Yet was the pleasure mixed with bitter thoughts. What would be the destiny of this fascinating young creature, so radiant with life and beauty? She belonged to a proscribed race; and though the brown color on her soft cheek was scarcely deeper than the sunny side of a golden pear, yet was it sufficient to exclude her from virtuous society. He thought of Rosalie's wish to carry her to France; and he would have fulfilled it, had he been unmarried. As it was, he inwardly resolved to make some arrangement to effect it, in a few years, even if it involved separation from his darling child.

But alas for the calculations of man! From the time of Rosalie's death, Edward had sought relief for his wretched feelings in the free use of wine. Xarifa was scarcely fifteen, when her father was found dead by the roadside; having fallen from his horse, on his way to visit her. He left no will; but his wife with kindness of heart worthy of a happier domestic fate, expressed a decided reluctance to change any of the plans he had made for the beautiful child at Sand-Hills.

Xarifa mourned her indulgent father, but not as one utterly desolate. True she had lived “like a flower deep hid in rocky cleft;” but the

sunshine of love had already peeped in upon her. Her teacher on the harp was a handsome and agreeable young man of twenty, the only son of an English widow. Perhaps Edward had not been altogether unmindful of the result, when he first invited him to the flowery cottage. Certain it is, he had more than once thought what a pleasant thing it would be, if English freedom from prejudice should lead him to offer legal protection to his graceful and winning child. Being thus encouraged, rather than checked, in his admiration, George Elliot could not be otherwise than strongly attracted toward his beautiful pupil. The lonely and unprotected state in which her father's death left her, deepened this feeling into tenderness. And lucky was it for her enthusiastic and affectionate nature; for she could not live without an atmosphere of love. In her innocence, she knew nothing of the dangers in her path; and she trusted George with an undoubting simplicity that rendered her sacred to his noble and generous soul. It seemed as if that flower-embossed nest was consecrated by the Fates to Love. The French have well named it *La Belle Passion*; for without it life were "a year without spring, or a spring without roses." Except the loveliness of infancy, what does earth offer so much like Heaven, as the happiness of two young, pure, and beautiful beings, living in each other's hearts?

Xarifa inherited her mother's poetic and impassioned temperament; and to her, above others, the first consciousness of these sweet emotions was like a golden sunrise on the sleeping flowers.

"Thus stood she at the threshold of the scene
Of busy life.
How fair it lay in solemn shade and sheen!
And he beside her, like some angel, posted
To lead her out of childhood's fairy land,
On to life's glancing summit, hand in hand."

Alas, the tempest was brooding over their young heads. Rosalie, though she knew it not, had been the daughter of a slave; whose wealthy master, though he remained attached to her to the end of her days, had carelessly omitted to have papers of manumission recorded. His heirs had lately failed, under circumstances, which greatly exasperated their creditors; and in an unlucky hour, they discovered their claim on Angelique's grandchild.

The gentle girl, happy as the birds in springtime, accustomed to the fondest indulgence, surrounded by all the refinements of life, timid as a young fawn, and with a soul full of romance, was ruthlessly seized by a sheriff, and placed on the public auction stand in Savannah. There she stood, trembling, blushing, and weeping; compelled to listen to the

grossest language, and shrinking from the rude hands that examined the graceful proportions of her beautiful frame. "Stop that," exclaimed a stern voice, "I bid two thousand dollars for her, without asking any of their d—d questions." The speaker was probably about forty years of age, with handsome features, but a fierce and proud expression. An older man, who stood behind him, bid two thousand five hundred. The first bid higher; then a third, a dashing young man, bid three thousand; and thus they went on, with the keen excitement of gamblers, until the first speaker obtained the prize, for the moderate sum of five thousand dollars.

And where was George, during this dreadful scene? He was absent on a visit to his mother, at Mobile. But, had he been at Sand-Hills, he could not have saved his beloved from the wealthy profligate, who was determined to obtain her at any price. A letter of agonized entreaty from her brought him home on the wings of the wind. But what could he do? How could he ever obtain a sight of her, locked up as she was in the princely mansion of her master? At last by bribing one of the slaves, he conveyed a letter to her, and received one in return. As yet, her purchaser treated her with respectful gentleness, and sought to win her favor, by flattery and presents; but she dreaded every moment, lest the scene should change, and trembled at the sound of every foot-fall. A plan was laid for escape. The slave agreed to drug his master's wine; a ladder of ropes was prepared, and a swift boat was in readiness. But the slave, to obtain a double reward, was treacherous. Xarifa had scarcely given an answering signal to the low, cautious whistle of her lover, when the sharp sound of a rifle was followed by a deep groan, and a heavy fall on the pavement of the courtyard. With frenzied eagerness she swung herself down by the ladder of ropes, and, by the glancing light of lanterns, saw George, bleeding and lifeless at her feet. One wild shriek, that pierced the brains of those who heard it, and she fell senseless by his side.

For many days she had a confused consciousness of some great agony, but knew not where she was, or by whom she was surrounded. The slow recovery of her reason settled into the most intense melancholy, which moved the compassion even of her cruel purchaser. The beautiful eyes, always pleading in expression, were now so heart-piercing in their sadness, that he could not endure to look upon them. For some months, he sought to win her smiles by lavish presents, and delicate attentions. He bought glittering chains of gold, and costly bands of pearl. His victim scarcely glanced at them, and the slave laid them away, unheeded and forgotten. He purchased the furniture of the cottage at Sand-Hills, and one morning Xarifa found her harp at the

bedside, and the room filled with her own books, pictures, and flowers. She gazed upon them with a pang unutterable, and burst into an agony of tears; but she gave her master no thanks, and her gloom deepened.

At last his patience was exhausted. He grew weary of her obstinacy, as he was pleased to term it; and threats took the place of persuasion.

In a few months more, poor Xarifa was a raving maniac. That pure temple was desecrated; that loving heart was broken; and that beautiful head fractured against the wall in the frenzy of despair. Her master cursed the useless expense she had cost him; the slaves buried her; and no one wept at the grave of her who had been so carefully cherished, and so tenderly beloved.

Reader, do you complain that I have written fiction? Believe me, scenes like these are of no unfrequent occurrence at the South. The world does not afford such materials for tragic romance, as the history of the Quadroons.

Sally Ann's Experience



ELIZA CALVERT HALL



COME RIGHT IN an' set down. I was jest wishin' I had somebody to talk to. Take that chair right by the door so's you can get the breeze."

And Aunt Jane beamed at me over her silver-rimmed spectacles and hitched her own chair a little to one side, in order to give me the full benefit of the wind that was blowing softly through the white-curtained window, and carrying into the room the heavenliest odors from a field of clover that lay in full bloom just across the road. For it was June in Kentucky, and clover and bluegrass were running in sweet riot over the face of the earth.

"Yes, I'm a-piecin' quilts again," she said, snipping away at the bits of calico in her lap. "I did say I was done with that sort o' work; but this mornin' I was rummagin' around up in the garret, an' I come across this bundle of pieces, an' thinks I, 'I reckon it's intended for me to piece one more quilt before I die'; I must 'a' put 'em there thirty years ago an' clean forgot 'em, an' I've been settin' here all the evenin' cuttin' 'em an' thinkin' about old times.

"Jest feel o' that," she continued, tossing some scraps into my lap. "They ain't no such caliker nowadays. This ain't your five-cent stuff that fades in the first washin' an' wears out in the second. A caliker dress was somethin' worth buyin' an' worth makin' up in them days. That blue-flowered piece was a dress I got the spring before Abram

died. When I put on mournin' it was as good as new, an' I give it to sister Mary. That one with the green ground and white figger was my niece Rebecca's. She wore it the first time to the county Fair the year I took the premium on my salt-risin' bread an' sponge cake. This black an' white piece Sally Ann Flint give me. I ricollect 'twas in blackberry time, an' I'd been out in the big pastur' pickin' some for supper, an' I stopped in at Sally Ann's for a drink o' water on my way back. She was cuttin' out this dress." Aunt Jane broke off with a little soprano laugh.

"Did I ever tell you about Sally Ann's Experience?" she said, as she laid two three-cornered pieces together and began to sew with her slender, nervous old fingers.

To find Aunt Jane alone and in a reminiscent mood! This was delightful.

"Do tell me," I said.

Aunt Jane was silent for a few moments. She always made this pause before beginning a story, and there was something impressive about it. I used to think she was making an invocation to the goddess of Memory.

"'Twas forty years ago," she began musingly, "an' the way of it was this. Our church was considerably out o' fix. It needed a new roof. Some o' the winder lights was out, an' the floor was as bare as your hand, an' always had been. The men-folk managed to git the roof shingled an' the winders fixed, an' us women in the Mite Society concluded we'd git a cyarpet. We'd been savin' up our money for some time, an' we had about twelve dollars. I ricollect what a' argument we had, for some of us wanted the cyarpet, an' some wanted to give it to furrin missions, as we'd set out to do at first. Sally Ann was the one that settled it. She says at last—Sally Ann was in favor of the cyarpet—she says, 'Well, if any of the heathen fails to hear the Gospel on account of our gittin' this cyarpet, they'll be saved anyhow, so Parson Page says. An' if we send the money an' they do hear the Gospel, like as not they won't repent, an' then they're certain to be damned. An' it seems to me as long as we ain't sure what they'll do, we might as well keep the money an' git the cyarpet. I never did see much sense anyhow,' says she, 'in givin' people a chance to damn theirselves.'

"Well, we decided to take Sally Ann's advice, an' we was talkin' about app'intin' a committee to go to town the follerin' Monday an' pick out the cyarpet, when all at once 'Lizabeth Taylor—she was our treasurer—she spoke up, an' says she, 'They ain't no use app'intin' that committee. The money's gone,' she says, sort o' short and quick. 'I kep' it in my top bureau drawer, an' when I went for it yistiddy, it was gone. I'll pay it back if I'm ever able, but I ain't able now.' An' with that she

got up an' walked out o' the room, before anyone could say a word, an' we seen her goin' down the road lookin' straight before her an' walkin' right fast.

"An' we—we set there an' stared at each other in a sort o' dazed way. I could see that everybody was thinkin' the same thing, but nobody said a word, till our minister's wife—she was as good a woman as ever lived—she says, '*Judge not.*'"

"An' them two words was jest like a sermon to us. Then Sally Ann spoke up an' says, 'For the Lord's sake don't let the men-folks know anything about this. They're always sayin' that women ain't fit to handle money, an' I for one don't want to give 'em no more ground to stand on than they've already got.'

"So we agreed to say nothin' about it, an' all of us kept our promise except Milly Amos. She had mighty little sense to begin with, an' havin' been married only about two months, she'd about lost that little. So next mornin' I happened to meet Sam Amos an' he says to me, 'Aunt Jane, how much money have you women got to'rds the new cyarpet for the church?' I looked him square in the face, an' I says, 'Are you a member of the Ladies' Mite Society of Goshen Church, Sam Amos?' 'Cause if you are, you already know how much money we've got, an' if you ain't, you've got no business knowin'. An' furthermore,' says I, 'there's some women that can't keep a secret an' a promise, an' some that can, an' I can.' An' that settled *him*.

"Well, 'Lizabeth never showed her face outside her door for more'n a month afterwards, an' a more pitiful-lookin' creatur' you never saw than she was when she come out to prayer-meetin' the night Sally Ann give her experience. She set 'way back in the church, an' she was as pale and peaked as if she had been through a siege of typhoid. I ricollect it all as if it had been yesterday. We'd sung 'Welcome, Sweet Hour,' an' Parson Page prayed a pra'r, an' then called on the brethren to say anything they might feel called on to say concernin' their experience in the past week. Old Uncle Jim Matthews begun to clear his throat, an' I knew as well as I knew my name he was fixin' to git up an' tell how precious the Lord had been to his soul, jest like he'd been doin' every Wednesday night for twenty years. But before he got started, here come 'Lizabeth walkin' down the side aisle an' stopped right in front o' the pulpit.

" 'I've somethin' to say,' she says. 'It's been on my mind till I can't stand it any longer. I've got to tell it, or I'll go crazy. It was me that took that cyarpet money. I only meant to borry it. I thought sure I'd be able to pay it back before it was wanted. But things went wrong, an' I ain't known a peaceful minute since, an' never shall again, I reckon. I took it

to pay my way up to Louisville, the time I got the news that Mary was dyin’.’

“Mary was her daughter by her first husband, you see. ‘I begged Jacob to give me the money to go on,’ says she, ‘an’ he wouldn’t do it. I tried to give up and stay, but I jest couldn’t. Mary was all I had in the world; and maybe you that has children can put yourself in my place an’ know what it would be to hear your only child callin’ to you from her deathbed an’ you not able to go to her. I asked Jacob three times for the money,’ she says, ‘an’ when I found he wouldn’t give it to me, I said to myself, “I’m goin’ anyhow.” I got down on my knees,’ says she, ‘an’ asked the Lord to show me a way, an’ I felt sure he would. As soon as Jacob had eat his breakfast an’ gone out on the farm, I dressed myself, an’ as I opened the top bureau drawer to get out my best collar, I saw the missionary money. It come right into my head,’ says she, ‘that maybe this was the answer to my prayer; maybe I could borry this money an’ pay it back some way or other before it was called for. I tried to put it out o’ my head, but the thought kept comin’ back; an’ when I went down into the sittin’-room to get Jacob’s cyarpetsack to carry a few things in, I happened to look up at the mantelpiece, an’ saw the brass candlesticks with prisms all ’round ’em that used to belong to my mother; an’ all at once I seemed to see jest what the Lord intended for me to do.

“‘You know,’ she says, ‘I had a boarder summer before last—that lady from Louisville, an’ she wanted them candlesticks the worst kind, an’ offered me fifteen dollars for ’em. I wouldn’t part with ’em then, but she said if ever I wanted to sell ’em, to let her know, an’ she left her name an’ address on a cyard. I went to the big Bible an’ got out the cyard, and I packed the candlesticks in the cyarpetbag, an’ put on my bonnet. When I opened the door I looked up the road, and the first thing I saw was Dave Crawford comin’ along in his new buggy. I went out to the gate and he drew up and asked me if I was goin’ to town, and said he’d take me. It looked like the Lord was leadin’ me all the time,’ says she, ‘but the way things turned out it must ’a’ been Satan. I got to Mary just two hours before she died, and she looked up in my face and says, “Mother, I knew God wouldn’t let me die till I’d seen you once more.”’ ”

Here Aunt Jane took off her glasses and wiped her eyes. “I can’t tell this without cryin’ to save my life,” said she; “but ’Lizabeth never shed a tear. She looked like she’d got past cryin’, and she talked straight on as if she’d made up her mind to say jest so much, and she’d die if she didn’t get to say it. Well.

“‘As soon as the funeral was over,’ says she, ‘I set out to find the lady that wanted the candlesticks. She wa’n’t at home, but her niece was there, an’ said she’d heard her aunt speak of the candlesticks often; and she’d be home in a few days and would send me the money right off. I come home thinkin’ it was all right, and I kept expectin’ the money every day, but it never come till day before yesterday. I wrote three times about it, but I never got a word from her, till Monday. She had jest got home, she said, and hoped I hadn’t been inconvenienced by the delay. She wrote a nice, polite letter and sent a check for fifteen dollars, and here it is. I wanted to confess it all that day at the Mite Society, but somehow I couldn’t till I had the money right in my hand to pay back. If the lady had only come back when her niece said she was comin’, it would all have turned out right, but I reckon it’s a judgment on me for meddling with the Lord’s money. God only knows what I’ve suffered,’ says she, ‘but if I had it to do over again, I believe I’d do it. Mary was all the child I had in the world, and I had to see her once more before she died. I’ve been a member of this church for twenty years,’ says she, ‘but I reckon you’ll have to turn me out now.’

“The pore thing stood there tremblin’ and holdin’ out the check as if she expected somebody to come and take it. Old Silas Petty was glowerin’ at her from under his eyebrows, and it put me in mind of the Pharisees and the woman they wanted to stone, and I ricollect thinkin’, ‘O if the Lord Jesus would jest come in and take her part!’ And while we all set there like a passel o’ mutes, Sally Ann got up and marched down the middle aisle and stood right by ‘Lizabeth. You know what funny thoughts people will have sometimes.

“Well, I felt so relieved. It popped into my head all at once that we didn’t need the Lord after all, Sally Ann would do jest as well. It seemed sort o’ like sacrilege, but I couldn’t help it.

“Well, Sally Ann looked all around as composed as you please and says she, ‘I reckon if anybody’s turned out o’ this church on account o’ that miserable little money, it’ll be Jacob and not ‘Lizabeth. A man that won’t give his wife money to go to her dyin’ child is too mean to stay in a Christian church anyhow; and things is come to a pretty pass in this state when a woman that had eight hundred dollars when she married has to go to her husband and git down on her knees and beg for what’s her own. Where’s that money ‘Lizabeth had when she married you?’ says she, turnin’ round and lookin’ Jacob in the face. ‘Down in that ten-acre medder lot, ain’t it?—and in that new barn you built last spring. A pretty elder you are, ain’t you? Elders don’t seem to have improved much since Susannah’s times. If there ain’t one sort o’ mean-

ness in 'em it's another,' says she. Goodness knows what she would 'a' said, but jest here old Deacon Petty rose up. And says he, 'Brethren'—and he spread his arms out and waved 'em up and down like he was goin' to pray—'brethren, this is awful! If this woman wants to give her religious experience, why,' says he, very kind and condescendin', 'of course she can do so. But when it comes to *a woman* standin' up in the house of the Lord and revilin' an elder as this woman is doin', why, I tremble,' says he, 'for the church of Christ. For don't the Apostle Paul say, "Let your women keep silence in the church"?"

"As soon as he named the 'Postle Paul, Sally Ann give a kind of snort. Sally Ann was turrible free-spoken, and I've heard her say many a time that she had as little use for the 'Postle Paul as she had for Judas Iscariot. And when Deacon Petty said that, she jest squared herself like she intended to stand there till jedgment day, and says she, 'The 'Postle Paul has been dead ruther too long for me to be afraid of him. And I never heard of him app'intin' Deacon Petty to represent him in this church. If the 'Postle Paul don't like what I'm sayin', let him rise up from his grave in Corinthians or Ephesians, or wherever he's buried, and say so. I've got a message from the Lord to the men-folks of this church, and I'm goin' to deliver it, Paul or no Paul,' says she. 'And as for you, Silas Petty, I ain't forgot the time I dropped in to see Maria one Saturday night and found her washin' out her flannel petticoat and dryin' it before the fire. And every time I've had to hear you lead in prayer since then I've said to myself, "Lord, how high can a man's prayers rise toward heaven when his wife ain't got but one flannel skirt to her name? No higher than the back of his pew, if you'll let me tell it." I knew jest how it was,' said Sally Ann, 'as well as if Maria'd told me. She'd been havin' the milk and butter money from the old roan cow she'd raised from a little heifer, and jest because feed was scarce, you'd sold her off before Maria had money enough to buy her winter flannels. I can give my experience, can I? Well, that's jest what I'm a-doin',' says she; 'an' while I'm about it,' says she, 'I'll give in some experience for 'Lizabeth an' Maria an' the rest of the women who betwixt their husbands an' the 'Postle Paul have about lost all the gumption and grit that the Lord started them out with. If the 'Postle Paul,' says she, 'has got anything to say about a woman workin' like a slave for twenty-five years an' then havin' to set up an' wash out her clothes Saturday night so's she can go to church clean Sunday mornin', I'd like to hear it. But don't you dare to say nothin' to me about keepin' silence in the church. There was times when Paul says he didn't know whether he had the Spirit of God or not, an' I'm certain that when he wrote that text he wasn't no more inspired than you are, Silas Petty, when you tell Maria to shut her mouth.'

"Job Taylor was settin' right in front of Deacon Petty, an' I reckon he thought his time was comin' next; so he gets up easy-like with his red bandana to his mouth, an' starts out. But Sally Ann headed him off before he'd gone six steps, an' says she, 'There ain't nothin' the matter with you, Job Taylor; you set right down an' hear what I've got to say. I've knelt an' stood through enough o' your long-winded prayers, an' now it's my time to talk an' yours to listen.'

"An' bless your life, if Job didn't set down as meek as Moses, an' Sally Ann lit right into him. An' says she, 'I reckon you're afraid I'll tell some o' your meanness, ain't you? An' the only thing that stands in my way is that there's so much to tell I don't know where to begin. There ain't a woman in this church,' says she, 'that don't know how Marthy scrimped and worked and saved to buy her a new set o' furniture, an' how you took the money with you when you went to Cincinnati the spring before she died, an' come back without the furniture. An' when she asked you for the money, you told her that she and everything she had belonged to you, and that your mother's old furniture was good enough for anybody. It's my belief,' says she, 'that's what killed Marthy. Women are dyin' every day an' the doctors will tell you it's some new-fangled disease or other, when, if the truth was known, it's nothin' but wantin' somethin' they can't get, an' hopin' an' waitin' for somethin' that never comes. I've watched 'em an' I know. The night before Marthy died she says to me, "Sally Ann," says she, "I could die a heap peace-fuller if I jest knew the front room was fixed up right with a new set of furniture for the funeral.'" ' An' Sally Ann p'inted her finger right at Job an' says she, 'I said then an' I say it now to your face, Job Taylor, you killed Marthy the same as if you'd taken her by the throat and choked the life out of her.'

"Mary Embry, Job's sister-in-law, was settin' right behind me, an' I heard her say 'Amen!' as fervent as if somebody had been prayin'. Job set there lookin' like a sheep-killin' dog, an' Sally Ann went right on.

"'I know,' says she, 'the law gives you the right to your wives' earnin's an' everything they've got down to the clothes on their backs; an' I've always said there was some Kentucky law that was made for the express purpose of encouragin' men in their natural meanness—a p'int in which the Lord knows they don't need no encouragin'. There's some men,' says she, 'that'll sneak behind the 'Postle Paul when they're plannin' any meanness against their wives, an' some that runs to the law, an' you're one of the law kind. But mark my words,' says she, 'one of these days you men who've been stealin' your wives' property an' defraudin' 'em, an' cheatin' 'em out o' their just dues, you'll have to stand before a judge that cares mighty little for Kentucky law; an' all the

law an' all the scripture you can bring up won't save you from goin' where the rich man went.'

"I can see Sally Ann right now;" and Aunt Jane pushed her glasses up on her forehead and looked with a dreamy, retrospective gaze through the doorway and beyond, where swaying elms and maples were whispering softly to each other as the breeze touched them. "She had on her old black poke-bonnet and some black yarn mitts, an' she didn't come nigh up to Job's shoulder, but Job set an' listened as if he jest *had to*. I heard Dave Crawford shufflin' his feet an' clearin' his throat while Sally Ann was talkin' to Job. Dave's farm j'ined Sally Ann's, an' they had a lawsuit once about the way a fence ought to run, an' Sally Ann beat him. He always despised Sally Ann after that, an' used to call her a 'he-woman.' Sally Ann heard the shufflin', an' as soon as she got through with Job she turned round to Dave, an' says she: 'Do you think your hemmin' an' scrapin' is goin' to stop me, Dave Crawford? You're one o' the men that makes me think that it's better to be a Kentucky horse than a Kentucky woman. Many's the time,' says she, 'I've seen pore July with her head tied up crawlin' around tryin' to cook for sixteen harvest hands, an' you out in the stable cossetin' up a sick mare an' rubbin' down your three-year-olds to get 'em in trim for the fair. Of all the things that's hard to understand,' says she, 'the hardest is a man that has more mercy on his horse than he has on his wife. July's found rest at last,' says she, 'out in the graveyard; an' every time I pass your house I thank the Lord you've got to pay a good price for your cookin' now, as there ain't a woman in the country fool enough to step into July's shoes.'

"But, la!" said Aunt Jane, breaking off with her happy laugh—the laugh of one who revels in rich memories—"what's the use of me tellin' all this stuff? The long and the short of it is that Sally Ann had her say about nearly every man in the church. She told how Mary Embry had to cut up her weddin' skirts to make clothes for her first baby; an' how John Martin stopped Hannah one day when she was carryin' her mother a pound of butter, an' made her go back an' put the butter down in the cellar; an' how Lije Davison used to make Ann pay him for every bit of chicken feed, an' then take half the egg money because the chickens got into his garden, an' how Abner Page give his wife twenty-five cents for spendin' money the time she went to visit her sister.

"Sally Ann always was a masterful sort of woman, an' that night it seemed like she was possessed. The way she talked made me think of the day of Pentecost an' the gift of tongues. An' finally she got to the minister. I'd been wonderin' all along if she was goin' to let him off. She turned around to where he was settin' under the pulpit, an' says she,

'Brother Page, you're a good man, but you ain't so good you couldn't be better. It was jest last week,' says she, 'that the women come around beggin' money to buy you a new suit of clothes to go to Presbytery in; an' I told 'em if it was to get Mrs. Page a new dress, I was ready to give; but not a dime was I goin' to give towards puttin' finery on a man's back. I'm tired o' seein' the ministers walk up into the pulpit in their slick black broadcloths, an' their wives sittin' down in the pew in an old black silk that's been turned upside down, wrong side out an' hind part before, an' sponged an' pressed an' made over till you can't tell whether it's silk or caliker or what.'

"Well, I reckon there was some o' the women that expected the roof to fall down on us when Sally Ann said that right to the minister. But it didn't fall an' Sally Ann went straight on. 'An' when it comes to the perseverance of the saints an' the decrees of God,' says she, 'there ain't many can preach a better sermon; but there's some of your sermons,' says she, 'that ain't fit for nothin' but kindlin' fires. There's that one you preached last Sunday on the twenty-fourth verse of the fifth chapter of Ephesians. I reckon I've heard about a hundred an' fifty sermons on that text, an' I reckon I'll keep on hearin' 'em as long as there ain't nobody but men to do the preachin'. Anybody would think,' says she, 'that you preachers was struck blind every time you git through with the twenty-fourth verse, for I never heard a sermon on the twenty-fifth verse. I believe there's men in this church that thinks the fifth chapter of Ephesians hasn't got but twenty-four verses, an' I'm goin' to read the rest of it to 'em for once anyhow.'

"An' if Sally Ann didn't walk right up into the pulpit same as if she'd been ordained, an' read what Paul said about men lovin' their wives as Christ loved the church, an' as they loved their own bodies.

"'Now,' says she, 'if Brother Page can reconcile these texts with what Paul says about women submittin' an' bein' subject, he's welcome to do it. But,' says she, 'if I had the preachin' to do, I wouldn't waste no time reconcilin'. I'd jest say that when Paul told women to be subject to their husbands in everything, he wasn't inspired; an' when he told men to love their wives as they loved their own bodies, he was inspired; an' I'd like to see the Presbytery that could silence me from preachin' as long as I wanted to preach. As for turnin' out o' the church,' says she, 'I'd like to know who's to do the turnin' out. When the disciples brought that woman to Christ there wasn't a man in the crowd fit to cast a stone at her; an' if there's any man nowadays good enough to set in judgment on a woman, his name ain't on the rolls of Goshen Church. If 'Lizabeth,' says she, 'had as much common sense as she's got conscience, she'd know that the matter o' that money didn't concern nobody but our

Mite Society, an' we women can settle it without any help from you deacons and elders.'

"Well, I reckon Parson Page thought if he didn't head Sally Ann off some way or other she'd go on all night; so when she kind o' stopped for breath an' shut up the big Bible, he grabbed a hymnbook an' says,

"'Let us sing, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds."'"

"He struck up the tune himself; an' about the middle of the first verse Mis' Page got up an' went over to where 'Lizabeth was standin', an' give her the right hand of fellowship, an' then Mis' Petty did the same; an' first thing we knew we was all around her shakin' hands an' huggin' her an' cryin' over her. 'Twas a reg'lar love-feast; and we went home feelin' like we'd been through a big protracted meetin' and got religion over again.

"'Twasn't more'n a week till 'Lizabeth was down with slow fever—nervous collapse, old Doctor Pendleton called it. We took turns nussin' her, and one day she looked up in my face and says, 'Jane, I know now what the mercy of the Lord is.'"

Here Aunt Jane paused and began to cut three-cornered pieces out of a time-stained square of flowered chintz. The quilt was to be of the wild-geese pattern. There was a drowsy hum from the beehive near the window, and the shadows were lengthening as sunset approached.

"One queer thing about it," she resumed, "was that while Sally Ann was talkin', not one of us felt like laughin'. We set there as solemn as if parson was preachin' to us on 'lection and predestination. But whenever I think about it now, I laugh fit to kill. And I've thought many a time that Sally Ann's plain talk to them men done more good than all the sermons us women had had preached to us about bein' 'shamefaced' and 'submittin'' ourselves to our husbands, for every one o' them women come out in new clothes that spring, an' such a change as it made in some of 'em. I wouldn't be surprised if she did have a message to deliver, jest as she said. The Bible says an ass spoke up once an' reproved a man, an' I reckon if an ass can reprove a man, so can a woman. An' it looks to me like men stand in need of reprovin' now as they did in Balaam's days."

"How about you and Uncle Abram?" I suggested. "Didn't Sally Ann say anything about you in her experience?"

Aunt Jane's black eyes snapped with some of the fire of her long-past youth. "La! no, child," she said. "Abram never was that kind of a man, an' I never was that kind of a woman. I ricollect as we was walkin' home that night Abram says, sort o' humblelike: 'Jane, hadn't you better git that brown merino you was lookin' at last County Court day?'

"An' I says, 'Don't you worry about that brown merino, Abram. It's a-lyin' in my bottom drawer right now. I told the storekeeper to cut it off jest as soon as your back was turned, and Mis' Simpson is goin' to make it next week.' And Abram he jest laughed and says, 'Well, Jane, I never saw your beat.' You see, I never was no hand at 'submittin' myself to my husband like some women. I've often wondered if Abram wouldn't 'a' been jest like Silas Petty if I'd been like Maria. I've noticed that whenever a woman's willin' to be imposed upon, there's always a man standin' 'round ready to do the imposin'. I never went to no lawbook to find out what my rights was. I did my duty faithful to Abram, and when I wanted anything I went and got it, and Abram paid for it, and I can't see but what we got on jest as well as we'd 'a' done if I'd a-'submitted' myself."

Longer and longer grew the shadows, and the faint tinkle of bells came in through the windows. The cows were beginning to come home. The spell of Aunt Jane's dramatic art was upon me. I began to feel that my own personality had somehow slipped away from me, and those dead people, evoked from their graves by an old woman's histrionism, seemed more real to me than my living, breathing self.

"There now, I've talked you clean to death," she said with a happy laugh, as I rose to go. "But we've had a real nice time and I'm glad you come."

The sun was almost down as I walked slowly away. When I looked back at the turn of the road, Aunt Jane was standing on the doorstep shading her eyes and peering across the level fields. I knew what it meant. Beyond the fields was a bit of woodland, and in one corner of that you might, if your eyesight was good, discern here and there a glimpse of white. It was the old burying-ground of Goshen Church; and I knew by the strained attitude and intent gaze of the watcher in the door that somewhere in the sunlit space between Aunt Jane's doorstep and the little country graveyard, the souls of the living and the dead were keeping a silent tryst.

The Conquest of Doña Jacoba



GERTRUDE ATHERTON

I



FOREST OF WILLOWS cut by a forking creek, and held apart here and there by fields of yellow mustard blossoms fluttering in their pale green nests, or meadows carpeted with the tiny white and yellow flowers of early summer. Wide patches of blue where the willows ended, and immense banks of daisies bordering fields of golden grain, bending and shimmering in the wind with the deep even sweep of rising tide. Then the lake, long, irregular, half choked with tules, closed by a marsh. The valley framed by mountains of purplish gray, dull brown, with patches of vivid green and yellow; a solitary gray peak, barren and rocky, in sharp contrast to the rich Californian hills; on one side fawn-colored slopes, and slopes with groves of crouching oaks in their hollows; opposite and beyond the cold peak, a golden hill rising to a mount of earthy green; still lower, another peak, red and green, mulberry and mold; between and afar, closing the valley, a line of pink-brown mountains splashed with blue.

Such was a fragment of Don Roberto Duncan's vast rancho, Los Quervos, and on a plateau above the willows stood the adobe house, white and red-tiled, shaped like a solid letter H. On the deep veranda, sunken between the short forearms of the H, Doña Jacoba could stand

and issue commands in her harsh imperious voice to the Indians in the rancheria among the willows, whilst the long sala behind overflowed with the gay company her famous hospitality had summoned, the bare floor and ugly velvet furniture swept out of thought by beautiful faces and flowered silken gowns.

Behind the sala was an open court, the grass growing close to the great stone fountain. On either side was a long line of rooms, and above the sala was a library opening into the sleeping room of Doña Jacoba on one side, and into that of Elena, her youngest and loveliest daughter, on the other. Beyond the house were a dozen or more buildings: the kitchen; a room in which steers and bullocks, sheep and pigs, were hanging; a storehouse containing provisions enough for a hotel; and the manufactories of the Indians. Somewhat apart was a large building with a billiard room in its upper story and sleeping rooms below. From her window Elena could look down upon the high-walled corral with its prancing horses always in readiness for the pleasure-loving guests, and upon the broad road curving through the willows and down the valley.

The great house almost shook with life on this brilliant day of the month of June 1852. Don Roberto Duncan, into whose shrewd Scotch hands California had poured her wealth for forty years, had long ago taken to himself a wife of Castilian blood; tomorrow their eldest remaining daughter was to be married to a young Englishman, whose father had been a merchant in California when San Francisco was Yerba Buena. Not a room was vacant in the house. Young people had come from Monterey and San Francisco, Santa Barbara and Los Angeles. Beds had been put up in the library and billiard room, in the storerooms and attics. The corral was full of strange horses, and the huts in the willows had their humbler guests.

Francisca sat in her room surrounded by a dozen chattering girls. The floor beneath the feet of the Californian heiress was bare, and the heavy furniture was of uncarved mahogany. But a satin quilt covered the bed, lavish Spanish needlework draped chest and tables, and through the open window came the June sunshine and the sound of the splashing fountain.

Francisca was putting the last stitches in her wedding gown, and the girls were helping, advising, and commenting.

"Art thou not frightened, Panchita," demanded one of the girls, "to go away and live with a strange man? Just think, thou hast seen him but ten times."

"What of that?" asked Francisca, serenely, holding the rich corded silk at arm's length, and half closing her eyes as she readjusted the deep

flounce of Spanish lace. "Remember, we shall ride and dance and play games together for a week with all of you, dear friends, before I go away with him. I shall know him quite well by that time. And did not my father know him when he was a little boy? Surely, he cannot be a cruel man, or my father would not have chosen him for my husband."

"I like the Americans and the Germans and the Russians," said the girl who had spoken, "particularly the Americans. But these English are so stern, so harsh sometimes."

"What of that?" asked Francisca again. "Am I not used to my father?"

She was a singular-looking girl, this compound of Scotch and Spanish. Her face was cast in her father's hard mold, and her frame was large and sturdy, but she had the black luxuriant hair of Spain, and much grace of gesture and expression.

"I would not marry an Englishman," said a soft voice.

Francisca raised her eyebrows and glanced coldly at the speaker, a girl of perfect loveliness, who sat behind a table, her chin resting on her clasped hands.

"Thou wouldst marry whom our father told thee to marry, Elena," said her sister, severely. "What hast thou to say about it?"

"I will marry a Spaniard," said Elena, rebelliously. "A Spaniard, and no other."

"Thou wilt do what?" asked a cold voice from the door. The girls gave a little scream. Elena turned pale, even Francisca's hands twitched.

Doña Jacoba was an impressive figure as she stood in the doorway: a tall unbowed woman with a large face and powerful penetrating eyes. A thin mouth covering white teeth separated the prominent nose and square chin. A braid of thick black hair lay over her fine bust, and a black silk handkerchief made a turban for her lofty head. She wore a skirt of heavy black silk and a shawl of Chinese crêpe, one end thrown gracefully over her shoulder.

"What didst thou say?" she demanded again, a sneer on her lips.

Elena made no answer. She stared through the window at the servants laying the table in the dining room on the other side of the court, her breath shortening as if the room had been exhausted of air.

"Let me hear no more of that nonsense," continued her mother. "A strange remark, truly, to come from the lips of a Californian! Thy father has said that his daughters shall marry men of his race—men who belong to that island of the North; and I have agreed, and thy sisters are well married. No women are more virtuous, more industri-

ous, more religious, than ours; but our men—our young men—are a set of drinking gambling vagabonds. Go to thy room and pray there until supper.”

Elena ran out of an opposite door, and Doña Jacoba sat down on a high-backed chair and held out her hand for the wedding gown. She examined it, then smiled brilliantly.

“The lace is beautiful,” she said. “There is no richer in California, and I have seen Doña Trinidad Iturbi y Moncada’s and Doña Modeste Castro’s. Let me see thy mantilla once more.”

Francisca opened a chest nearly as large as her bed, and shook out a long square of superb Spanish lace. It had arrived from the city of Mexico but a few days before. The girls clapped their admiring hands, as if they had not looked at it twenty times, and Doña Jacoba smoothed it tenderly with her strong hands. Then she went over to the chest and lifted the beautiful silk and crêpe gowns, one by one, her sharp eyes detecting no flaw. She opened another chest and examined the piles of underclothing and bed linen, all of finest wool, and deeply bordered with the drawn work of Spain.

“All is well,” she said, returning to her chair. “I see nothing more to be done. Thy brother will bring the emeralds, and the English plate will come before the week is over.”

“Is it sure that Santiago will come in time for the wedding?” asked a half-English granddaughter, whose voice broke suddenly at her own temerity.

But Doña Jacoba was in a gracious mood.

“Surely. Has not Don Roberto gone to meet him? He will be here at four today.”

“How glad I shall be to see him!” said Francisca. “Just think, my friends, I have not seen him for seven years. Not since he was eleven years old. He has been on that cold dreadful island in the North all this time. I wonder has he changed!”

“Why should he change?” asked Doña Jacoba. “Is he not a Cortez and a Duncan? Is he not a Californian and a Catholic? Can a few years in an English school make him of another race? He is seven years older, that is all.”

“True,” assented Francisca, threading her needle; “of course he could not change.”

Doña Jacoba opened a large fan and wielded it with slow curves of her strong wrist. She had never been cold in her life, and even a June day oppressed her.

“We have another guest,” she said in a moment—“a young man, Don Dario Castañares of Los Robles Rancho. He comes to buy

cattle of my husband, and must remain with us until the bargain is over."

Several of the girls raised their large black eyes with interest. "Don Dario Castaños," said one; "I have heard of him. He is very rich and very handsome, they say."

"Yes," said Doña Jacoba, indifferently. "He is not ugly, but much too dark. His mother was an Indian. He is no husband, with all his leagues, for any Californian of pure Castilian blood."

II

Elena had gone up to her room, and would have locked the door had she possessed a key. As it was, she indulged in a burst of tears at the prospect of marrying an Englishman, then consoled herself with the thought that her best-beloved brother would be with her in a few hours.

She bathed her face and wound the long black coils about her shapely head. The flush faded out of her white cheeks, and her eyelids were less heavy. But the sadness did not leave her eyes nor the delicate curves of her mouth. She had the face of the Madonna, stamped with the heritage of suffering; a nature so keenly capable of joy and pain that she drew both like a magnet, and would so long as life stayed in her.

She curled herself in the window seat, looking down the road for the gray cloud of dust that would herald her brother. But only black flocks of crows mounted screaming from the willows, to dive and rise again. Suddenly she became conscious that she was watched, and her gaze swept downward to the corral. A stranger stood by the gates, giving orders to a vaquero but looking hard at her from beneath his low-dropped sombrero.

He was tall, this stranger, and very slight. His face was nearly as dark as an Indian's, but set with features so perfect that no one but Doña Jacoba had ever found fault with his skin. Below his dreaming ardent eyes was a straight delicate nose; the sensuous mouth was half parted over glistening teeth and but lightly shaded by a silken mustache. About his graceful figure hung a dark red serape embroidered and fringed with gold, and his red velvet trousers were laced, and his yellow riding boots gartered, with silver.

Elena rose quickly and pulled the curtain across the window; the blood had flown to her hair, and a smile chased the sadness from her mouth. Then she raised her hands and pressed the palms against the

slope of the ceiling, her dark upturned eyes full of terror. For many moments she stood so, hardly conscious of what she was doing, seeing only the implacable eyes of her mother. Then down the road came the loud regular hoof falls of galloping horses, and with an eager cry she flung aside the curtain, forgetting the stranger.

Down the road, half hidden by the willows, came two men. When they reached the rancheria, Elena saw the faces: a sandy-haired hard-faced old Scotsman, with cold blue eyes beneath shaggy red brows, and a dark slim lad, every inch a Californian. Elena waved her handkerchief and the lad his hat. Then the girl ran down the stairs and over to the willows. Santiago sprang from his horse, and the brother and sister clung together kissing and crying, hugging each other until her hair fell down and his hat was in the dust.

"Thou hast come!" cried Elena at last, holding him at arm's length that she might see him better, then clinging to him again with all her strength. "Thou never wilt leave me again—promise me! Promise me, my Santiago! Ay, I have been so lonely."

"Never, my little one. Have I not longed to come home that I might be with you? O my Elena! I know so much. I will teach you everything."

"Ay, I am proud of thee, my Santiago! Thou knowest more than any boy in California—I know."

"Perhaps that would not be much," he said with fine scorn. "But come, Elena mia, I must go to my mother; she is waiting. She looks as stern as ever; but how I have longed to see her!"

They ran to the house, passing the stranger, who had watched them with folded arms and scowling brows. Santiago rushed impetuously at his mother; but she put out her arm, stiff and straight, and held him back. Then she laid her hand, with its vicelike grip, on his shoulder, and led him down the sala to the chapel at the end. It was arranged for the wedding, with all the pomp of velvet altar cloth and golden candelabra. He looked at it wonderingly. Why had she brought him to look upon this before giving him a mother's greeting?

"Kneel down," she said, "and repeat the prayers of thy Church—prayers of gratitude for thy safe return."

The boy folded his hands deprecatingly.

"But, mother, remember it is seven long years since I have said the Catholic prayers. Remember I have been educated in an English college, in a Protestant country."

Her tall form curved slowly toward him, the blood blazed in her dark cheeks.

"What!" she screamed incredulously. "Thou hast forgotten the prayers of thy Church—the prayers thou learned at my knee?"

"Yes, mother, I have," he said desperately. "I cannot—"

"God! God! Mother of God! My son says this to me!" She caught him by the shoulder again and almost hurled him from the room. Then she locked her hand about his arm and dragged him down the sala to his father's room. She took a greenhide reata from the table and brought it down upon his back with long sweeps of her powerful arm, but not another word came from her rigid lips. The boy quivered with the shame and pain, but made no resistance—for he was a Californian, and she was his mother.

III

Joaquin, the eldest son, who had been hunting bear with a number of his guests, returned shortly after his brother's arrival and was met at the door by his mother.

"Where is Santiago?" he asked. "I hear he has come."

"Santiago has been sent to bed, where he will remain for the present. We have an unexpected guest, Joaquin. He leans there against the tree—Don Dario Castañares. Thou knowest who he is. He comes to buy cattle of thy father, and will remain some days. Thou must share thy room with him, for there is no other place—even on the billiard table."

Joaquin liked the privacy of his room, but he had all the hospitality of his race. He went at once to the stranger, walking a little heavily, for he was no longer young and slender, but with a cordial smile on his shrewd, warmly colored face.

"The house is at your service, Don Dario," he said, shaking the newcomer's hand. "We are honored that you come in time for my sister's wedding. It distresses me that I cannot offer you the best room in the house, but, Dios! we have a company here. I have only the half of my poor bed to offer you, but if you will deign to accept that—"

"I am miserable, wretched, to put you to such inconvenience—"

"Never think of such a thing, my friend. Nothing could give me greater happiness than to try to make you comfortable in my poor room. Will you come now and take a siesta before supper?"

Dario followed him to the house, protesting at every step, and Joaquin threw open the door of one of the porch rooms.

"At your service, señor—everything at your service."

He went to one corner of the room and kicked aside a pile of saddles, displaying a small hillock of gold in ten- and fifty-dollar slugs. "You will find about thirty thousand dollars there. We sold some cattle

a few days ago. I beg that you will help yourself. It is all at your service. I will now go and send you some aguardiente, for you must be thirsty." And he went out and left his guest alone.

Dario threw himself face downward on the bed. He was in love, and the lady had kissed another man as if she had no love to spare. True, it was but her brother she had kissed, but would she have eyes for anyone else during a stranger's brief visit? And how, in this crowded house, could he speak a word with her alone? And that terrible dragon of a mother! He sprang to his feet as an Indian servant entered with a glass of aguardiente. When he had burnt his throat, he felt better. "I will stay until I have won her, if I remain a month," he vowed. "It will be some time before Don Roberto will care to talk business."

But Don Roberto was never too occupied to talk business. After he had taken his bath and siesta, he sent a servant to request Don Dario Castañares to come up to the library, where he spent most of his time, received all his visitors, reprimanded his children, and took his after-dinner naps. It was a luxurious room for the Californian of that day. A thick red English carpet covered the floor; one side of the room was concealed by a crowded bookcase, and the heavy mahogany furniture was handsomely carved, although upholstered with horsehair.

In an hour every detail of the transaction had been disposed of, and Dario had traded a small rancho for a herd of cattle. The young man's face was very long when the last detail had been arranged, but he had forgotten that his host was a Californian as himself. Don Roberto poured him a brimming glass of angelica and gave him a hearty slap on the back.

"The cattle will keep for a few days, Don Dario," he said, "and you shall not leave this house until the festivities are over. Not until a week from tomorrow—do you hear? I knew your father. We had many a transaction together, and I take pleasure in welcoming his son under my roof. Now get off to the young people, and do not make any excuses."

Dario made none.

IV

The next morning at eight, Francisca stood before the altar in the chapel, looking very handsome in her rich gown and soft mantilla. The bridegroom, a sensible-looking young Englishman, was somewhat nervous, but Francisca might have been married every morning at eight

o'clock. Behind them stood Don Roberto in a new suit of English broadcloth, and Doña Jacoba in heavy lilac silk, half covered with priceless lace. The six bridesmaids looked like a huge bouquet, in their wide delicately colored skirts. Their dark eyes, mischievous, curious, thoughtful, flashed more brilliantly than the jewels they wore.

The sala and Don Roberto's room beyond were so crowded that some of the guests stood in the windows, and many could not enter the doors; every family within a hundred leagues had come to the wedding. The veranda was crowded with girls, the sparkling faces draped in black mantillas or bright rebosos, the full gay gowns fluttering in the breeze. Men in jingling spurs and all the bravery of gold-laced trousers and short embroidered jackets respectfully elbowed their way past brown and stout old women that they might whisper a word into some pretty, alert little ear. They had all ridden many leagues that morning, but there was not a trace of fatigue on any face. The court behind the sala was full of Indian servants striving to catch a glimpse of the ceremony.

Dario stood just within the front door, his eyes eagerly fixed upon Elena. She looked like a California lily in her white gown; even her head drooped a little as if a storm had passed. Her eyes were absent and heavy; they mirrored nothing of the solemn gaiety of the morning; they saw only the welts on her brother's back.

Dario had not seen her since Santiago's arrival. She had not appeared at supper, and he had slept little in consequence; in fact, he had spent most of the night playing *monte* with Joaquin and a dozen other young men in the billiard room.

During the bridal mass the padre gave communion to the young couple, and to those that had made confession the night before. Elena was not of the number, and during the intense silence she drew back and stood and knelt near Dario. They were not close enough to speak, had they dared; but the Californian had other speech than words, and Dario and Elena made their confession that morning.

During breakfast they were at opposite ends of the long table in the dining room, but neither took part in the songs and speeches, the toasts and laughter. Both had done some maneuvering to get out of sight of the old people, and sit at one of the many other tables in the sala, on the corridor, in the court; but Elena had to go with the bridesmaids, and Joaquin insisted upon doing honor to the uninvited guest. The Indian servants passed the rich and delicate, the plain and peppered, dishes, the wines and the beautiful cakes for which Doña Jacoba and her daughters were famous. The massive plate that had done duty for generations in Spain was on the table; the crystal had been cut in

England. It was the banquet of a grandee, and no one noticed the silent lovers.

After breakfast the girls flitted to their rooms and changed their gowns, and wound rebosos or mantillas about their heads; the men put off their jackets for lighter ones of flowered calico, and the whole party, in buggies or on horseback, started for a bullfight, which was to take place in a field about a mile behind the house. Elena went in a buggy with Santiago, who was almost as pale as she. Dario, on horseback, rode as near her as he dared; but when they reached the fence about the field careless riders crowded between, and he could only watch her from afar.

The vaqueros in their broad, black hats shining with varnish, their black velvet jackets, their crimson sashes, and short, black velvet trousers laced with silver cord over spotless linen, looked very picturesque as they dashed about the field jingling their spurs and shouting at each other. When the bulls trotted in and greeted each other pleasantly, the vaqueros swung their hissing reatas and yelled until the maddened animals wreaked their vengeance on each other, and the serious work of the day began.

Elena leaned back with her fan before her eyes, but Santiago looked on eagerly in spite of his English training.

"Caramba!" he cried, "but that old bull is tough. Look, Elena! The little one is down. No, no! He has the big one. Ay! yi, yi! By Jove! he is gone—no, he has run off—he is on him again! He has ripped him up! Brava! brava!"

A cheer as from one throat made the mountains echo, but Elena still held her fan before the field.

"How canst thou like such bloody sport?" she asked disgustedly. "The poor animals! What pleasure canst thou take to see a fine brute kicking in his death agony, his bowels trailing on the ground?"

"Fie, Elena! Art thou not a Californian? Dost thou not love the sport of thy country? Why, look at the other girls! They are mad with excitement. By Jove! I never saw so many bright eyes. I wonder if I shall be too stiff to dance tonight. Elena, she gave me a beating! But tell me, little one, why dost thou not like the bullfight? I feel like another man since I have seen it."

"I cannot be pleased with cruelty. I shall never get used to see beasts killed for amusement. And Don Dario Castañares does not like it either. He never smiled once, nor said 'Brava!'"

"Aha! And how dost thou know whether he did or not? I thought thy face was behind that big black fan."

"I saw him through the sticks. What does 'By Jove' mean, my Santiago?"

He enlightened her, then stood up eagerly. Another bull had been brought in, and one of the vaqueros was to fight him. During the next two hours Santiago gave little thought to his sister, and sometimes her long black lashes swept above the top of her fan. When five or six bulls had stamped and roared and gored and died, the guests of Los Quervos went home to chocolate and siesta, the others returned to their various ranchos.

But Dario took no nap that day. Twice he had seen an Indian girl at Elena's window, and as the house settled down to temporary calm, he saw the girl go to the rancheria among the willows. He wrote a note, and followed her as soon as he dared. She wore a calico frock, exactly like a hundred others, and her stiff black hair cut close to her neck in the style enforced by Doña Jacoba; but Dario recognized her imitation of Elena's walk and carriage. He was very nervous, but he managed to stroll about and make his visit appear one of curiosity. As he passed the girl he told her to follow him, and in a few moments they were alone in a thicket. He had hard work to persuade her to take the note to her mistress, for she stood in abject awe of Doña Jacoba; but love of Elena and sympathy for the handsome stranger prevailed, and the girl went off with the missive.

The staircase led from Don Roberto's room to Doña Jacoba's; but the lady's all-seeing eyes were closed, and the master was snoring in his library. Malia tiptoed by both, and Elena, who had been half asleep, sat up, trembling with excitement, and read the impassioned request for an interview. She lifted her head and listened, panting a little. Then she ran to the door and looked into the library. Her father was sound asleep; there could be no doubt of that. She dared not write an answer, but she closed the door and put her lips to the girl's ear.

"Tell him," she murmured, horrified at her own boldness—"tell him to take me out for the contradanza tonight. There is no other chance." And the girl went back and delivered the message.

V

The guests and family met again at supper; but yards of linen and mounds of plate, spirited, quickly turning heads, flowered muslin gowns and silken jackets, again separated Dario and Elena. He caught a glimpse now and again of her graceful head turning on its white

throat, or of her sad pure profile shining before her mother's stern old face.

Immediately after supper the bride and groom led the way to the sala, the musicians tuned their violins and guitars, and after an hour's excited comment upon the events of the day the dancing began. Doña Jacoba could be very gracious when she chose, and she moved among her guests like a queen tonight, begging them to be happy, and electrifying them with her brilliant smile. She dispelled their awe of her with magical tact, and when she laid her hand on one young beauty's shoulder, and told her that her eyes put out the poor candles of Los Quervos, the girl was ready to fling herself on the floor and kiss the tyrant's feet. Elena watched her anxiously. Her father petted her in his harsh abrupt way. If she had ever received a kiss from her mother, she did not remember it; but she worshiped the blinding personality of the woman, although she shook before the relentless will. But that her mother was pleased to be gracious tonight was beyond question, and she gave Dario a glance of timid encouragement, which brought him to her side at once.

"At your feet, señorita," he said, "may I dare to beg the honor of the contradanza?"

She bent her slender body in a pretty courtesy. "It is a small favor to grant a guest who deigns to honor us with his presence."

He led her out, and when he was not gazing enraptured at the graceful swaying and gliding of her body, he managed to make a few conventional remarks.

"You did not like bullfighting, señorita?"

"He watched me," she thought. "No, señor. I like nothing that is cruel."

"Those soft eyes could never be cruel. Ay, you are so beautiful, señorita."

"I am but a little country girl, señor. You must have seen far more beautiful women in the cities. Have you ever been in Monterey?"

"Yes, señorita, many times. I have seen all the beauties, even Doña Modeste Castro. Once, too—that was before the Americans came—I saw the Señorita Ysabel Herrera, a woman so beautiful that a man robbed a church and murdered a priest for her sake. But she was not so beautiful as you, señorita."

The blood throbbed in the girl's fair cheeks. "He must love me," she told herself, "to think me more beautiful than Ysabel Herrera. Joaquin says she was the handsomest woman that ever was seen."

"You compliment me, señor," she answered vaguely. "She had wonderful green eyes. So has the Señora Castro. Mine are only brown, like so many other girls'."

"They are the most beautiful eyes in California. They are like the Madonna's. I do not care for green eyes." His black ones flashed their language to hers, and Elena wondered if she had ever been unhappy. She barely remembered where she was, forgot that she was a helpless bird in a golden cage. Her mate had flown through the open door.

The contradanza ends with a waltz, and as Dario held her in his arms his last remnant of prudence gave way.

The contradanza ends with a waltz, and as Dario held her in his arms his last remnant of prudence gave way.

"Elena, Elena," he murmured passionately, "I love thee. Dost thou not know it? Dost thou not love me a little? Ay, Elena! I have not slept one hour since I saw thee."

She raised her eyes to his face. The sadness still dwelt in their depths, but above floated the soft flame of love and trust. She had no coquetry in her straightforward and simple nature.

"Yes," she whispered, "I love thee."

"And thou art happy, querida mia? Thou art happy here in my arms?"

She let her cheek rest for a moment against his shoulder. "Yes, I am very happy."

"And thou wilt marry me?"

The words brought her back to reality, and the light left her face.

"Ay," she said, "why did you say that? It cannot ever be."

"But it shall be! Why not? I will speak with Don Roberto in the morning."

The hand that lay on his shoulder clutched him suddenly. "No, no," she said hurriedly, "promise me that you will not speak to him for two or three days at least. My father wants us all to marry Englishmen. He is kind, and he loves me, but he is mad for Englishmen. And we can be happy meanwhile."

The music stopped, and he could only murmur his promises before leading her back to her mother.

He dared not take her out again, but he danced with no one else in spite of many inviting eyes, and spent the rest of the night on the corridor, where he could watch her unobserved. The walls were so thick at Los Quervos that each window had a deep seat within and without. Dario ensconced himself, and was comfortable, if tumultuous.

VI

With dawn the dancing ended, and quiet fell upon Los Quervos. But at twelve gay voices and laughter came through every window. The family and guests were taking their cold bath, ready for another eighteen hours of pleasure.

Shortly after the long dinner, the iron-barred gates of the corral were thrown open and a band of horses, golden bronze in color, with silvern mane and tail, silken embroidered saddles on their slender backs, trotted up to the door. The beautiful creatures shone in the sun like burnished armor; they arched their haughty necks and lifted their small feet as if they were Californian beauties about to dance El Son.

The girls wore short riding skirts, gay sashes, and little round hats. The men wore thin jackets of brightly colored silk, gold-laced knee breeches, and silver spurs. They tossed the girls upon their saddles, vaulted into their own, and all started on a wild gallop for the races.

Dario, with much maneuvering, managed to ride by Elena's side. It was impossible to exchange a word with her, for keen and mischievous ears were about them; but they were close together, and a kind of ecstasy possessed them both. The sunshine was so golden, the quivering visible air so full of soft intoxication! They were filled with a reckless animal joy of living—the divine right of youth to exist and be happy. The bars of Elena's cage sank into the warm resounding earth; she wanted to cry aloud her joy to the birds, to hold and kiss the air as it passed. Her face sparkled, her mouth grew full. She looked at Dario, and he dug his spurs into his horse's flanks.

The representatives of many ranchos, their wives and daughters, awaited the party from Los Quervos. But none pushed his way between Dario and Elena that day. And they both enjoyed the races; they were in a mood to enjoy anything. They became excited and shouted with the rest as the vaqueros flew down the field. Dario bet and lost a ranchita, then bet and won another. He won a herd of cattle, a band of horses, a saddlebag of golden slugs. Surely, fortune smiled on him from the eyes of Elena. When the races were over they galloped down to the ocean and over the cliffs and sands, watching the ponderous waves fling themselves on the rocks, then retreat and rear their crests, to thunder on again.

"The fog!" cried someone. "The fog!" And with shrieks of mock terror they turned their horses' heads and raced down the valley, the fog after them like a phantom tidal wave; but they outstripped it, and

sprang from their horses at the corridor of Los Quervos with shouts of triumph and lightly blown kisses to the enemy.

After supper they found eggs piled upon silver dishes in the sala, and with cries of "Cascaron! Cascaron!" they flung them at each other, the cologne and flour and tinsel with which the shells were filled deluging and decorating them.

Doña Jacoba again was in a most gracious mood, and leaned against the wall, an amused smile on her strong serene face. Her husband stood by her, and she indicated Elena by a motion of her fan.

"Is she not beautiful tonight, our little one?" she asked proudly. "See how pink her cheeks are! Her eyes shine like stars. She is the handsomest of all our children, viejo."

"Yes," he said, something like tenderness in his cold blue eyes, "there is no prettier girl on twenty ranchos. She shall marry the finest Englishman of them all."

Elena threw a cascaron directly into Dario's mouth, and although the cologne scalded his throat, he heroically swallowed it, and revenged himself by covering her black locks with flour. The guests, like the children they were, chased each other all over the house, up and down the stairs; the men hid under tables, only to have a sly hand break a cascaron on the back of their heads, and to receive a deluge down the spinal column. The bride chased her dignified groom out into the yard, and a dozen followed. Then Dario found his chance.

Elena was after him, and as they passed beneath a tree he turned like a flash and caught her in his arms and kissed her. For a second she tried to free herself, mindful that her sisters had not kissed their lovers until they stood with them in the chapel; but she was made for love, and in a moment her white arms were clinging about his neck. People were shouting around them; there was time for but few of the words Dario wished to say.

"Thou must write me a little note every day," he commanded. "Thy brother's coat, one that he does not wear, hangs behind the door in my room. Tomorrow morning thou wilt find a letter from me in the pocket. Let me find one there, too. Kiss me again, consuelo de mi alma!" and they separated suddenly, to speak no more that night.

VII

The next morning, when Elena went to Joaquin's room to make the bed, she found Dario's note in the pocket of the coat, but she had had no opportunity to write one herself. Nor did she have time to read his

until after dinner, although it burned her neck and took away her appetite. When the meal was over, she ran down to the willows and read it there, then went straight to the favorite lounging place of an old vaquero who had adored her from the days when she used to trot about the rancho holding his forefinger, or perch herself upon his shoulder and command him to gallop.

He was smoking his pipe, and he looked up in some wonder as she stood before him, flushed and panting, her eyes darting apprehensive glances.

"Pedro," she said imperiously, "get down on thy hands and knees."

Pedro was the color of tanned leather and very hairy, but his face beamed with good nature. He put his pipe between his teeth and did as he was bidden. Elena produced the pencil and paper she had managed to purloin from her father's table, and kneeling beside her faithful vaquero, wrote a note on his back. It took her a long time to coin that simple epistle, for she never had written a love letter before. But Pedro knelt like a rock, although his old knees ached. When the note was finished she thrust it into her gown, and patted Pedro on the head.

"I love thee, my old man. I will make thee a new salve for thy rheumatism, and a big cake."

As she approached the house her mother stood on the corridor watching the young people mount, and Elena shivered as she met a fiery and watchful eye. Yesterday had been a perfect day, but the chill of fear touched this. She sprang on her horse and went with the rest to the games. Her brother Joaquin kept persistently by her side, and Dario thought it best not to approach her. She took little interest in the games. The young men climbed the greased pole amidst soft derisive laughter. The greased pig was captured by his tail in a tumult of excitement, which rivaled the death of the bull, but Elena paid no attention. It was not until Dario, restive with inaction, entered the lists for the buried rooster, and by its head twisted it from the ground as his horse flew by, that she was roused to interest; and as many had failed, and as his was the signal victory of the day, he rode home somewhat consoled.

That night, as Dario and Elena danced the contradanza together, they felt the eyes of Doña Jacoba upon them, but he dared to whisper:

"Tomorrow morning I speak with thy father. Our wedding day must be set before another sun goes down."

"No, no!" gasped Elena; but for once Dario would not listen.

VIII

As soon as Elena had left his room next morning, Dario returned and read the note she had put in her brother's pocket. It gave him courage, his dreamy eyes flashed, his sensitive mouth curved proudly. As soon as dinner was over he followed Don Roberto up to the library. The old man stretched himself out in the long brass and leather chair which had been imported from England for his comfort, and did not look overjoyed when his guest begged a few moments' indulgence.

"I am half asleep," he said. "Is it about those cattle? Joaquin knows as much about them as I do."

Dario had not been asked to sit down, and he stood before Don Roberto feeling a little nervous, and pressing his hand against the mantelpiece.

"I do not wish to speak of cattle, señor."

"No? What then?" The old man's face was flushed with wine, and his shaggy brows were drooping heavily.

"It is—it is about Elena."

The brows lifted a little.

"Elena?"

"Yes, señor. We love each other very much. I wish to ask your permission that we may be married."

The brows went up with a rush; the stiff hairs stood out like a roof above the cold, angry eyes. For a moment Don Roberto stared at the speaker as if he had not heard; then he sprang to his feet, his red face purple.

"Get out of my house, you damned vagabond!" he shouted. "Go as fast as God Almighty'll let you. You marry my daughter—you damned Indian! I wouldn't give her to you if you were pure-blooded Castilian, much less to a half-breed whelp. And you have dared to make love to her. Go! Do you hear? Or I'll kick you down the stairs!"

Dario drew himself up and looked back at his furious host with a pride that matched his own. The blood was smarting in his veins, but he made no sign and walked down the stair.

Don Roberto went at once in search of his wife. Failing to find her, he walked straight into the sala, and taking Elena by the arm before the assembled guests, marched her upstairs and into her room, and locked the door with his key.

Elena fell upon the floor and sobbed with rebellious mortification and terror. Her father had not uttered a word, but she knew the meaning of his summary act, and other feelings soon gave way to

despair. That she should never see Dario Castañares again was certain, and she wept and prayed with all the abandon of her Spanish nature. A picture of the Virgin hung over the bed, and she raised herself on her knees and lifted her clasped hands to it beseechingly. With her tumbled hair and white face, her streaming upturned eyes and drawn mouth, she looked more like the Mater Dolorosa than the expressionless print she prayed to.

"Mary! Mother!" she whispered, "have mercy on thy poor little daughter. Give him to me. I ask for nothing else in this world. I do not care for gold or ranchos, only to be his wife. I am so lonely, my mother, for even Santiago thinks of so many other things than of me. I only want to be loved, and no one else will ever love me who can make me love him. Ay! give him to me! give him to me!" And she threw herself on her face once more, and sobbed until her tears were exhausted. Then she dragged herself to the window and leaned over the deep seat. Perhaps she might have one glimpse of him as he rode away.

She gave a little cry of agony and pleasure. He was standing by the gates of the corral whilst the vaqueros rounded up the cattle he had bought. His arms were folded, his head hung forward. As he heard her cry, he lifted his face, and Elena saw the tears in his eyes. For the moment they gazed at each other, those lovers of California's long ago, while the very atmosphere quivering between them seemed a palpable barrier. Elena flung out her arms with a sudden passionate gesture; he gave a hoarse cry, and paced up and down like a racehorse curbed with a Spanish bit. How to have one last word with her? If she were behind the walls of the fort of Monterey it would be as easy. He dared not speak from where he was. Already the horses were at the door to carry the eager company to a fight between a bull and a bear. But he could write a note if only he had the materials. It was useless to return to his room, for Joaquin was there; and he hoped never to see that library again. But was there ever a lover in whom necessity did not develop the genius of invention? Dario flashed upward a glance of hope, then took from his pocket a slip of the rice paper used for making cigaritos. He burnt a match, and with the charred stump scrawled a few lines.

Elena! Mine! Star of my life! My sweet! Beautiful and idolized. Farewell! Farewell, my darling! My heart is sad. God be with thee.

DARIO.

He wrapped the paper about a stone, and tied it with a wisp of grass. With a sudden flexile turn of a wrist that had thrown many a

reata, he flung it straight through the open window. Elena read the meaningless phrases, then fell insensible to the floor.

IX

It was the custom of Doña Jacoba personally to oversee her entire establishment every day, and she always went at a different hour, that laziness might never feel sure of her back. Today she visited the rancheria immediately after dinner, and looked through every hut with her piercing eyes. If the children were dirty, she peremptorily ordered their stout mammas to put them into the clean clothes which her bounty had provided. If a bed was unmade, she boxed the ears of the owner and sent her spinning across the room to her task. But she found little to scold about; her discipline was too rigid. When she was satisfied that the huts were in order, she went down to the great stone tubs sunken in the ground, where the women were washing in the heavy shade of the willows. In their calico gowns they made bright bits of color against the drooping green of the trees.

"Maria," she cried sharply, "thou art wringing that fine linen too harshly. Dost thou wish to break in pieces the bridal clothes of thy señorita? Be careful, or I will lay the whip across thy shoulders."

She walked slowly through the willows, enjoying the shade. Her fine old head was held sternly back, and her shoulders were as square as her youngest son's; but she sighed a little, and pressed a willow branch to her face with a caressing motion. She looked up to the gray peak standing above its fellows, bare, ugly, gaunt. She was not an imaginative woman, but she always had felt in closer kinship with that solitary peak than with her own blood. As she left the wood and saw the gay cavalcade about to start—the burnished horses, the dashing caballeros, the girls with their radiant faces and jaunty habits—she sighed again. Long ago she had been the bride of a brilliant young Mexican officer for a few brief years; her youth had gone with his life.

She avoided the company and went round to the buildings at the back of the house. Approving here, reproaching there, she walked leisurely through the various rooms where the Indians were making lard, shoes, flour, candles. She was in the chocolate manufactory when her husband found her.

"Come—come at once," he said. "I have good news for thee."

She followed him to his room, knowing by his face that tragedy had visited them. But she was not prepared for the tale he poured forth with violent interjections of English and Spanish oaths. She had de-

tected a flirtation between her daughter and the uninvited guest, and not approving of flirtations, had told Joaquin to keep his eyes upon them when hers were absent; but that the man should dare and the girl should stoop to think of marriage wrought in her a passion to which her husband's seemed the calm flame of a sperm candle.

"What!" she cried, her hoarse voice breaking. "What! A half-breed aspire to a Cortez!" She forgot her husband's separateness with true Californian pride. "My daughter and the son of an Indian! Holy God! And she has dared!—she has dared! The little imbecile! The little—But," and she gave a furious laugh, "she will not forget again."

She caught the greenhide reata from the nail and went up the stair. Crossing the library with heavy tread, as if she would stamp her rage through the floor, she turned the key in the door of her daughter's room and strode in. The girl still lay on the floor, although consciousness had returned. As Elena saw her mother's face she cowered pitifully. That terrible temper seldom dominated the iron will of the woman, but Santiago had shaken it a few days ago, and Elena knew that her turn had come.

Doña Jacoba shut the door and towered above her daughter, red spots on her face, her small eyes blazing, an icy sneer on her mouth. She did not speak a word. She caught the girl by her delicate shoulder, jerked her to her feet, and lashed her with the heavy whip until screams mingled with the gay laughter of the parting guests. When she had beaten her until her own arm ached, she flung her on the bed and went out and locked the door.

Elena was insensible again for a while, then lay dull and inert for hours. She had a passive longing for death. After the suffering and the hideous mortification of that day there seemed no other climax. The cavalcade rode beneath her windows once more, with their untired laughter, their splendid vitality. They scattered to their rooms to don their bright evening gowns, then went to the dining room and feasted.

After supper Francisca unlocked Elena's door and entered with a little tray on her hand. Elena refused to eat, but her sister's presence roused her, and she turned her face to the wall and burst into tears.

"Nonsense!" said Francisca, kindly. "Do not cry, my sister. What is a lover? The end of a little flirtation? My father will find thee a husband—a strong fair English husband like mine. Dost thou not prefer blondes to brunettes, my sister? I am sorry my mother beat thee, but she has such a sense of her duty. She did it for thy good, my Elena. Let me dress thee in thy new gown, the white silk with the pale blue

flowers. It is high in the neck and long in the sleeves, and will hide the marks of the whip. Come down and play cascarones and dance until dawn and forget all about it."

But Elena only wept on, and Francisca left her for more imperative duties.

The next day the girl still refused to eat, although Doña Jacoba opened her mouth and poured a cup of chocolate down her throat. Late in the afternoon Santiago slipped into the room and bent over her.

"Elena," he whispered hurriedly. "Look! I have a note for thee."

Elena sat upright on the bed, and he thrust a piece of folded paper into her hand. "Here it is. He is in San Luis Obispo and says he will stay there. Remember it is but a few miles away. My—"

Elena sank back with a cry, and Santiago blasphemed in English. Doña Jacoba unlocked her daughter's hand, took the note, and led Santiago from the room. When she reached her own, she opened a drawer and handed him a canvas bag full of gold.

"Go to San Francisco and enjoy yourself," she said. "Interfere no further between your sister and your parents, unless you prefer that reata to gold. Your craft cannot outwit mine, and she will read no notes. You are a foolish boy to set your sense against your mother's. I may seem harsh to my children, but I strive on my knees for their good. And when I have made up my mind that a thing is right to do, you know that my nature is of iron. No child of mine shall marry a lazy vagabond who can do nothing but lie in a hammock and bet and gamble and make love. And a half-breed! Mother of God! Now go to San Francisco, and send for more money when this is gone."

Santiago obeyed. There was nothing else for him to do.

Elena lay in her bed, scarcely touching food. Poor child! her nature demanded nothing of life but love, and that denied her, she could find no reason for living. She was not sport-loving like Joaquin, nor practical like Francisca, nor learned like Santiago, nor ambitious to dance through life like her many nieces. She was but a clinging unreasoning creature, with warm blood and a great heart. But she no longer prayed to have Dario given her. It seemed to her that after such suffering her saddened and broken spirit would cast its shadows over her happiest moments, and she longed only for death.

Her mother, becoming alarmed at her increasing weakness, called in an old woman who had been midwife and doctor of the county for half a century. She came, a bent and bony woman who must have been majestic in her youth. Her front teeth were gone, her face was stained with dark splashes like the imprint of a prenatal hand. Over her head she wore a black shawl; and she looked enough like a witch to frighten

her patients into eternity had they not been so well used to her. She prodded Elena all over as if the girl were a loaf of bread and her knotted fingers sought a lump of flour in the dough.

"The heart," she said to Doña Jacoba with sharp emphasis, her back teeth meeting with a click, as if to proclaim their existence. "I have no herbs for that," and she went back to her cabin by the ocean.

That night Elena lifted her head suddenly. From the hill opposite her window came the sweet reverberation of a guitar: then a voice, which, though never heard by her in song before, was as unmistakable as if it had serenaded beneath her window every night since she had known Dario Castañares.

EL ULTIMO ADIOS

"Si dos con el alma
Se amaron en vida,
Y al fin se separan
En vida las dos;
Sabeis que es tan grande
Le pena sentida
Que con esa palabra
Se dicen adios.
Y en esa palabra
Que breve murmura,
Ni verse prometen
Niamarse se juran;
Que en esa palabra
Se dicen adios.
No hay queja mas honda,
Suspiro mas largo;
Que aquellas palabras
Que dicen adios.
Al fin ha llegado,
La muerte en la vida;
Al fin para entrambos
Muramos los dos:
Al fin ha llegado
La hora cumplida,
Del ultimo adios.
Ya nunca en la vida,
Gentil compañera
Ya nunca volveremos
A vernos los dos:

Por eso es tan triste
Mi acento postrere,
Por eso es tan triste
El ultimo adios."—

They were dancing downstairs; laughter floated through the open windows. Francisca sang a song of the bullfight, in her strong high voice; the frogs chanted their midnight mass by the creek in the willows; the coyotes wailed; the owls hooted. But nothing could drown that message of love. Elena lit a candle and held it at arm's length before the window. She knew that its ray went straight through the curtains to the singer on the hill, for his voice broke suddenly, then swelled forth in passionate answer. He sat there until dawn singing to her; but the next night he did not come, and Elena knew that she had not been his only audience.

X

The week of festivity was over; the bridal pair, the relatives, the friends went away. Quiet would have taken temporary possession of Los Quervos had it not been for the many passing guests lavishly entertained by Don Roberto.

And still Elena lay in her little iron bed, refusing to get out of it, barely eating, growing weaker and thinner every day. At the end of three weeks Doña Jacoba was thoroughly alarmed, and Don Roberto sent Joaquin to San Francisco for a physician.

The man of science came at the end of a week. He asked many questions, and had a long talk with his patient. When he left the sickroom, he found Don Roberto and Doña Jacoba awaiting him in the library. They were ready to accept his word as law, for he was an Englishman, and had won high reputation during his short stay in the new country.

He spoke with curt directness. "My dear sir, your child is dying because she does not wish to live. People who write novels call it dying of a broken heart; but it does not make much difference about the name. Your child is acutely sensitive, and has an extremely delicate constitution—predisposition to consumption. Separation from the young man she desires to marry has prostrated her to such an extent that she is practically dying. Under existing circumstances she will not live two months, and, to be brutally frank, you will have killed her. I understand that the young man is well-born on his father's side, and pos-

sessed of great wealth. I see no reason why she should not marry him. I shall leave her a tonic, but you can throw it out of the window unless you send for the young man," and he walked down the stair and made ready for his departure.

Don Roberto translated the verdict to his wife. She turned very gray, and her thin lips pressed each other. But she bent her head. "So be it," she said, "I cannot do murder. Send for Dario Castañares."

"And tell him to take her to perdition," roared the old man. "Never let me see her again."

He went down the stair, filled a small bag with gold, and gave it to the doctor. He found Joaquin and bade him go for Dario, then shut himself in a remote room, and did not emerge until late that day.

Doña Jacoba sent for the maid, Malia.

"Bring me one of your frocks," she said, "a set of your undergarments, a pair of your shoes and stockings." She walked about the room until the girl's return, her face terrible in its repressed wrath, its gray consciousness of defeat. When Malia came with the garments she told her to follow, and went into Elena's room and stood beside the bed.

"Get up," she said. "Dress thyself in thy bridal clothes. Thou art going to marry Dario Castañares today."

The girl looked up incredulously, then closed her eyes wearily.

"Get up," said her mother. "The doctor has said that we must let our daughter marry the half-breed or answer to God for her murder." She turned to the maid: "Malia, go downstairs and make a cup of chocolate and bring it up. Bring, too, a glass of angelica."

But Elena needed neither. She forgot her desire for death, her misgivings of the future; she slipped out of bed, and would have taken a pair of silk stockings from the chest, but her mother stopped her with an imperious gesture, and handed her the coarse shoes and stockings the maid had brought. Elena raised her eyes wonderingly, but drew them on her tender feet without complaint. Then her mother gave her the shapeless undergarments, the gaudy calico frock, and she put them on. When the maid returned with the chocolate and wine, she drank both. They gave her color and strength; and as she stood up and faced her mother, she had never looked more beautiful nor more stately in the silken gowns that were hers no longer.

"There are horses' hoofs," said Doña Jacoba. "Leave thy father's house and go to thy lover."

Elena followed her from the room, walking steadily, although she was beginning to tremble a little. As she passed the table in the library, she picked up an old silk handkerchief of her father's and tied it about her head and face. A smile was on her lips, but no joy could crowd the

sadness from her eyes again. Her spirit was shadowed; her nature had come to its own.

They walked through the silent house, and to Elena's memory came the picture of that other bridal, when the very air shook with pleasure and the rooms were jeweled with beautiful faces; but she would not have exchanged her own nuptial for her sister's calm acceptance.

When she reached the veranda she drew herself up and turned to her mother with all that strange old woman's implacable bearing.

"I demand one wedding present," she said. "The greenhide reata. I wish it as a memento of my mother."

Doña Jacoba, without the quiver of a muscle, walked into her husband's room and returned with the reata and handed it to her. Then Elena turned her back upon her father's house and walked down the road through the willows. Dario did not notice the calico frock or the old handkerchief about her head. He bent down and caught her in his arms and kissed her, then lifting her to his saddle, galloped down the road to San Luis Obispo. Doña Jacoba turned her hard, old face to the wall.

Ruth Herrick's Assignment



ELIZABETH G. JORDAN



MISS RUTH HERRICK, of the New York *Searchlight*, had been summoned into the presence of the managing editor. It was without special alacrity that she obeyed the call. Even as she dropped her pen and rose from her desk in the city room, she seemed to hear the slow drawl of the great man's voice, uttering the words which so often greeted her appearance in his office:

"Ah, Miss Herrick, I have a big story for you—a very big story."

Usually she felt herself responding to this with a pleasant thrill of expectancy. There was keen satisfaction to her in the working up of a "big story"; she enjoyed the journeys and experiences it frequently included, and the strange characters among whom it often led her. Neither the experiences nor the characters were always wholly agreeable, but she never complained. Even the managing editor acknowledged this. He had been heard to remark, in an expansive moment, that Ruth Herrick was a very superior woman, with no nerves or nonsense about her. The gracious opinion was promptly repeated to the girl, and the memory of it had cheered her during several assignments in which nerves and a woman were equally out of place.

But tonight she almost rebelled. Strangely enough, she was not ready for the work before her. Her thoughts flew from the bent heads and hurrying pens around her to a dining room up town, even now alight and flower-trimmed for the little supper which had been planned

to celebrate one of her greatest "beats." The *Searchlight* of that morning had contained her story; the chief and her fellow reporters had complimented her; there were pleasant rumors that a more substantial evidence of appreciation would be forthcoming. All day she had idled, enjoying the relaxation from the strain of the past week, and looking forward to that dinner for various and personal reasons. The society editor, who had been invited, was just about to leave the office. She saw him wave the last page of his copy triumphantly in the air, as he reached for his hat with the other hand. He was to make the speech of the evening, and he had promised his hostess that he would explain to the nonprofessional guests what a "beat" really means to the newspaper and reporter that secure it. Earlier in the day he had submitted his definition to Miss Herrick for her approval.

"A big beat," he had read solemnly, "is an important exclusive story. If it appears in your newspaper, it is the greatest journalistic feat of the year, implying the possession of superior skill, brains, and journalistic enterprise by the members of your staff. If it appears in the other fellow's newspaper, it means that some idiot has accidentally stumbled across a piece of news which doesn't amount to much anyway, and which he has garbled painfully in the telling. Your newspaper gives 'the correct facts' the second day, and calls attention to the fake story published by your rival. Then you privately censure your city editor and reporters for letting the other newspaper 'throw them down.' Meantime, the other fellow, who published the story first, is patting himself and his reporters on the back, 'jollyng' his city and managing editors, and crowing over his achievement on his editorial page. The reporter who brought in the story, or the 'tip,' gets some praise, and possibly a check. His position on the newspaper is secure—until he makes his next mistake. Tersely expressed, a beat is a story which only one newspaper gets, and which all the other newspapers wanted. A reporter with the right spirit will move heaven and earth to get it for the journal he represents."

"I've just prepared a graceful tribute to you," he called out as he caught her eye. "The chief says you're one of the most reliable members of the staff, can always be depended upon, and all that. They've been talking about you this afternoon in the editorial council."

Miss Herrick's face flushed a little as she returned his sunny smile. She was glad to have the compliment come to her in just this way. She was still blushing slightly as she entered the managing editor's office.

That gentleman sat at his desk, barricaded by wastepaper baskets and bundles of proofs. Small and grimy boys trailed in at intervals adding to the interesting collection before him, telegrams and cards and

notes. An habitual furrow between his eyes was deepened—for the occasion, his visitor told herself in the bitterness of the moment—but the effect was softened by a really charming smile. It was said that the *Searchlight's* presiding genius always wore that smile when he was giving a difficult assignment to one of his staff. It spoke of hope and confidence, and, incidentally, of the futility of excuse and objection. The young reporter had seen it before, and now found herself fixing a fascinated but hopeless gaze upon it. Her apprehensions were strengthened by the efforts of a young man with weak eyes and a corrugated brow, who sat in one corner diligently playing on a typewriter. He stopped long enough to recognize the young woman, and to run through a brief but expressive pantomime descriptive of the work before her. This habit had endeared him to the members of the reportorial staff.

The managing editor cleared a chair by an energetic sweep of one arm and, still smiling, looked keenly at the girl through his half-closed lids. Then he asked abruptly: "How much do you know about the Brandow case?"

Ruth Herrick's heart leaped suddenly. Was he going to give her that famous case after all? She had hinted last week that she wanted it, but he had sent Marlowe instead. Marlowe, she had noticed, had made an ignominious failure of it. She smiled inwardly as she recalled the column of vague conjecture and suggestions sent in the day before by that unhappy young man.

"I know that Helen Brandow is accused of having poisoned her husband," she replied quietly, "and that the evidence against her is purely circumstantial. I am familiar with all the theories that have been advanced, including those in the *Searchlight* this morning."

The young man at the typewriter looked up quickly at this, but the managing editor's face was impassive.

"She has refused to see reporters or friends," continued the girl. "So far as can be learned, she has not spoken a word since her arrest. Her trial will begin Monday, and she is awaiting it in the prison at Fairview. She is young and handsome, and her family is one of the best in the state. Public sympathy is wholly with her, and everybody says that she will be acquitted."

The managing editor's smile reappeared.

"Good," he said briskly. "I want you to take the first train to Fairview and interview that woman tomorrow morning."

"I'm almost positive she won't talk," murmured Miss Herrick doubtfully, but even as she spoke the last spark of rebellion died out, and she was planning ways and means.

"It is your business to make her talk," was the encouraging response. "Interview her and write the best story you ever wrote in your life. Everyone else has failed. If you are ambitious, here is your chance to distinguish yourself. I will have a boy at the station with letters which may help you. Goodnight."

Eighteen hours later she sat in the Fairview prison. It was easy enough to get there. The warden unbent marvelously under the influence of a strong personal letter and Miss Herrick's face. The girl felt quite like a distinguished guest as the stern old fellow spoke of stories of hers which he had read, and newspaper cuts of her which he had seen, "which," he added kindly, "don't look much like you." Then he was led to speak of Mrs. Brandow, to whom he and his wife had become much attached during the long months of her imprisonment. She had been restless and sleepless of late, and hadn't eaten much. He mentioned this last circumstance with a feeling he had not shown before. Evidently the sufferings of one who could not eat came keenly home to him. When his wife entered the room, it was with the keys in her hand, and the gratifying announcement that Mrs. Brandow would receive the caller for a few moments. For this Miss Herrick mentally thanked the prisoner's lawyer, whose faith in the ability of his client to rebuff reporters had been artlessly displayed during her call on him two hours before.

When the newspaperwoman passed through the door of the cell, her eyes, unaccustomed to the semigloom, saw but dimly the outline of a slender, black-robed figure, sitting at a small, plain table. The cell was larger than those in city prisons, and some effort had been made to render it habitable. There was a thick rug before the small iron bed, virginal in its white coverings. A heavy cashmere shawl opposite it concealed the whitewashed walls. The hand which put it there had sought to cover all trace of stone and iron by friendly draperies, but Mrs. Brandow would not have it so. A small dressing table held a number of silver-backed toilet articles, looking strangely out of place amid their grim surroundings. The light in the cell came through a small window and the barred door leading from the corridor, which was clean and damp, and glaringly white. The reporter hesitated an instant, and then went quickly forward.

The face which turned toward her was not the kind of face she had expected to see. Newspapermen had been gushing in their descriptions of the famous prisoner, possibly because their imaginations were stimulated by the fact that many of them had never seen her. Helen Brandow was not really beautiful; Miss Herrick was quick to recognize that as the other woman advanced to meet her. She made a hasty mental note of the healthily pale complexion, the dark, wavy hair, with its severely

plain parting in the center, the heavy eyebrows, the too firmly closed lips, and the royal carriage of head and body. But it was the prisoner's eyes at which she looked longest, and into which she found herself looking again and again during the interview that followed. They were brown, a tawny brown with yellow lights, but wholly expressionless. They looked into Ruth Herrick's now, coldly and with no reflection of the half-smile which rested on the prisoner's lips, as she motioned toward the chair she had just left, and seated herself on the bed. "I feel like an intruder, as I always do when I am making these unsolicited visits," said the reporter. "I wish I could tell you how I appreciate your kindness in receiving me at all." She was leaning back a little in her chair, and her strong, young face and fair hair were in relief against the rich background of the drapery on the wall. In one quick glance her gray eyes had taken in every detail of the prisoner's surroundings. She looked at the prisoner again, with something very frank and womanly in the look.

"I was not moved by a purely philanthropic spirit," responded Mrs. Brandow.

She contemplated her visitor with something akin to interest, but there was a suggestion of irony in her contralto voice. "Mr. Van Dyke assures me that you will not misrepresent me if I have anything to say," she continued; "but I have nothing to say. I asked you in to tell you so, and to thank you for the roses, and for your note, both of which pleased me. The letters of introduction you bring convince me that I am safe in doing this, and that you will not go away and picture me as tearing my hair and deluging my pillow with tears. You will observe that my hair is in good order, and that the pillow is quite dry."

"I cannot fancy you less than composed under any circumstances," said the visitor, who found her own composure returning to her, accompanied by a strong sense of surprise and interest in the personality of the woman before her. This was not the Helen Brandow of the press, but an infinitely more interesting character, who should be given to the public, through the *Searchlight*, in a pen-picture to be long remembered. Miss Herrick's spirits mounted high at the thought.

"I am glad you like the roses," she added. "I did not send them to win a welcome, but because a nice old woman in the village gave them to me as I was coming here this morning. She was working among them, and the sight was so pretty I couldn't help stopping. It made me think of my own home, down South. The roses are the common, or garden variety, you see, but they have the delicious, spicy fragrance which seems to belong only to the roses in old-fashioned gardens. The owner of these succumbed to my youthful charms, and I brought away

her best. I felt guilty, but not guilty enough to refuse them. It eased my conscience to leave them here for you."

Mrs. Brandow regarded her with a faint smile. "It had not occurred to me that the old women in this village spend their time in the peaceful pursuit of rose-growing," she remarked. "When I have been escorted back and forth they have been suspended over picket fences watching me go by. I never saw any roses, or any redeeming traits in the inhabitants."

"Perhaps you were too preoccupied to notice them. Aren't you becoming a little morbid under this trouble?"

The newspaperwoman was acutely conscious of her daring as she spoke, but the woman before her was plainly not to be approached by ordinary methods. She showed this still more clearly in her reply.

"Perhaps. I have had no desire for self-analysis of late. I used to tear myself up by the roots to watch my own growth, but the process was not pleasant. I am now trying to confine my attention to the things outside of me. It is less interesting; occasionally it wearies me. And I always abuse people and institutions when I am weary."

If there was a personal application in this, Miss Herrick passed it by with the smiling calmness of the trained reporter. "You are quite right," she said cheerfully. "But it would be infinitely more interesting to talk about you than about anything else. I should think you would be forced to turn your eyes inward occasionally, as a refreshing change from the things which weary you."

"The inner view is no longer pleasant."

Mrs. Brandow's smile, as she spoke, was not particularly pleasant, either. The reporter's thoughts flew suddenly to a certain Mary Bird, who had lost her reason under peculiarly depressing circumstances, which Miss Herrick had been unfortunate enough to witness. Mary had smiled on the newspaperwoman once or twice, and the latter, although not imaginative, remembered the smiles too vividly for her own comfort. When the prisoner spoke again, however, the resemblance, if there had been one, vanished.

"I have often felt that I should go mad in this place," she said, suddenly, and with a complete change of tone. There was almost an apology in her voice and manner. "But I am quite sane," she added, "and it is a pleasure to me to have you here, and to talk to you. I had not realized, until you came, how much I needed something to break in upon this hideous routine, and change the current of my thoughts. For one year my mind has fed upon itself. I have spoken at the rarest intervals, and then only to the warden and his wife. Now I suddenly find myself struggling with a desire to become garrulous, to pour out

my soul to you, as it were. I could almost 'tell you the story of my life.' All this would be an admirable illustration of the limitations of a woman's capacity for silence—but it isn't amusing. It shows me that I am not quite myself; I am nervous, and not wholly under my own control."

"I wish you would talk to me," said the reporter, earnestly. "Use me as a safety valve. Tell me the story of your life, as you say. It would interest me, and might help you. Or try to imagine that I am an old friend, who wants to know of your life here."

"If you were, I think you would be pained by the recital. And, besides, if you were, you would not be here. Even my wildest fancies never take the form of yearnings for old friends; their society would be too depressing, under the circumstances. No, I am glad you are a stranger, with a certain magnetism about you which interests me, and fills me with a silly desire to know what you think of me, and whether you fear me, or believe in me."

"I am sure I could not bear trouble with more philosophy than that you show," said the girl, evasively. She felt a strange reluctance to analyze her own impressions, but she watched the development of the other's peculiar mood with an odd mingling of womanly sympathy and professional interest.

"I am not as philosophic as I may seem. I have given myself up to the horror of this place, until, as I said, it has almost unnerved me. If I were myself, I would not be sitting here, talking almost confidentially to you—a stranger. Why should the presence and sympathy of another human being affect me, after what I have suffered and endured?"

"You have never been a happy woman?"

The reporter looked thoughtfully at the rose she held in her hand as she spoke, and pulled off its petals, one by one.

"For five years I have been the most miserable woman on earth."

The expression of the prisoner's face had changed. The smile was gone; the brown eyes looked at the falling petals in the other's lap, with the dreaminess of retrospection in their glance.

"Five years ago I married," she went on, almost to herself. "Since then I have known the depths of human misery and degradation. Within a week of my marriage I knew exactly what I had done—I had tied myself for life to the most consummate scoundrel in existence. He spent his time devising ways of persecuting and humiliating me, and his efforts were eminently successful. He made me what I am."

"You should have separated from him."

"Yes, but that was impossible. My mother, who is dependent on me, and whom I love as I never loved anyone else, lived with us. He was

sending my little sister to school. It pleased him to make a parade of what he was doing for my people. And his mother begged me to bear with him, to give him another chance, as he would go headlong to destruction if cast off entirely. I did bear with him—I gave him every chance, and he—he—”

The woman's voice broke. The listener had felt her face flush as the other's words came to her, and now, on a sudden impulse, she took the prisoner's hand. The white fingers closed suddenly upon her own with such force that the stone in a ring she wore sank into the flesh. But the act was involuntary, for the hand was dropped again with no indication on Mrs. Brandow's face that it had been offered and accepted.

“He was like an insane man,” continued the prisoner, her low voice gathering strength and force as she went on. “He brought persons to the house whom no respectable house should shelter. He forced me to receive them and humiliated me before them. I bear today the marks of his violence. I rose in the morning wondering what new and devilish torture awaited me, and I lay quaking in my bed at night knowing that I would soon hear him kicking at my door. I think I was hardly myself during that time, but I endured while it was I alone who had to suffer. But one night he raised his hand to my old mother, when she was trying to protect me from his brutality, and struck her down. That night I killed him.”

For an instant Ruth Herrick's heart stopped beating, but she sat motionless, watching the woman opposite her. There was no change in her calm face. Mrs. Brandow raised her eyes to it for a moment and dropped them again.

“I killed him,” she repeated dully. “I have said it over to myself a good many times during the awful days and nights I have spent in this place. I have even said it aloud to hear how it would sound, but it didn't relieve me as it does now. And you—you look as if I were talking about an insect. I felt that way at first. It didn't seem to me that he was a human being, and I killed him as I would have killed a poisonous thing that attacked me. I gave him poison which I had had for years and which was said to leave no trace. I had intended to take it myself if the worst came to the worst; I had never dreamed of giving it to him. But I did. It was all done in a minute and then—my God!” she broke out suddenly. “Can you realize what my life has been since? Can you imagine the horrors of my nights here, filled with thoughts of him moldering in his grave, and put there by me? When I have fancied my reason leaving me I have almost hoped it would go. But I am sane yet, that I may realize what and where I am, and suffer as I had never dreamed a human creature could suffer and live. Can't you say some-

thing? Or have I gone mad at last, and am I sitting here gibbering to the walls? Is it so common a thing for you to have murderesses—?”

“Does your mother know?” asked the reporter, quietly. They were the first words she had spoken, and she realized fully their possible effect.

The other woman's form relaxed. She fell on her knees, with her head buried in the white covering of the little iron bed. The first tears she had shed gushed from her eyes. Her figure rocked as she sobbed and moaned.

“No, no!” she said brokenly. “She believes in me—she does not suspect.”

The newspaperwoman dropped her elbows on the table before her, buried her chin in her hands, and thought it over. How it had all come about, she could hardly realize. She glanced again at the crouching figure on the floor, and wondered vaguely why it had been given to her to watch the awful travail of this woman's soul. Something of the story the public understood. It had furnished the motive for the crime. It was whispered that the death of Jack Brandow had much improved that part of the country where he had lived and moved. He had goaded this woman to madness. The revolt, the temptation, and the opportunity had presented themselves simultaneously, and she had fallen as stronger women might have fallen, Miss Herrick thought, had they been so tempted. And then had come the awakening, the desolation, the despair.

Ruth Herrick was usually a cool, unemotional young person, but she was profoundly moved now. Many thoughts crowded into her mind. She recalled what she had read of Helen Brandow's past life—the good she had done as a girl at school, her adoration of her mother, the hundreds of noble men and women who were her friends, and whose faith in her innocence was so steadfast. They were moving heaven and earth to save her now, and when their success had seemed assured, she had ruined all by this hour's talk which was just ended. Ruth Herrick almost groaned as the situation unrolled itself before her. It was something she had to face. She knew now that she had suspected almost from the first what the climax might be, and had resolutely put the thought from her. And now she had the “biggest beat” of the year. Already she could see the commotion in the managing editor's office when the news came in. He would be startled out of his usual calm. He had spoken of her chance to distinguish herself, but even he had asked but an interview. In his wildest imaginings he had not dreamed of a confession. She knew that. But she had it. If anything but the life of a human being had been at stake, how proudly and gladly she would have

gone to him, and how hard she would have tried to write the best story of her life, as he had ordered. But—this other woman at her feet. Something within the reporter asserted itself as counsel for her and spoke and would not down. Ruth Herrick's voice seemed to her to come from a long distance when she at last spoke.

"Do you realize what all this means to you? Had you forgotten that you were talking to a reporter?"

The woman on the floor sat up and raised her face to the speaker's. It was deathly pale, but calm, and the mouth was firm. "I know," she half whispered. "I forgot. But it is just as well. I could not have endured it any longer. It was a great relief, and I am ready for—the end."

"But if you had not spoken you would probably have been acquitted. Do you know that?"

"It doesn't matter," repeated the other, wearily. "If I had not told you, I should probably have told the warden. My nerves were at the highest tension, and you were present when they snapped. That's all. I am quite willing to bear the consequences of what I have done."

For a moment there was silence in the cell. The reporter looked through the barred door, out into the whitewashed corridor where a narrow shaft of sunlight fell. To her excited imagination there was something prophetic in the sight. Far down at the end of the hall, a scrubwoman hummed a street air as she worked. The whole life of Helen Brandow, if, indeed, she were allowed to live at all, would be passed in some such place as this if the *Searchlight* published that story. If it did not—Ruth Herrick set her teeth, and stared unseeingly at the opposite wall. If it did not, it would be because she withheld the news, to which, by every claim of loyalty, her newspaper was entitled. She withhold it!—she, "one of the most reliable members of the staff!" Was it not only last night the chief had said so? Something hot and wet filled her eyes. She, the practical; she, the loyal—she was going to allow her paper to be "thrown down" on the biggest story of the year! For, above it all, a little refrain sang in her ears, and it was, "One-more-chance— one-more-chance— one-more-chance." The scrubwoman seemed to be singing it, too, and it kept time with the clang of an anvil in a shop near by. Ruth Herrick dashed the tears from her eyes, and swallowed a lump that rose in her throat. When she spoke again there was no trace in voice or manner of the mental struggle through which she had passed.

"I am going to forget this interview," she said. "I am going to let you have the chance which a fair trial will give you. You could not talk to a jury as you have talked to me, but it will not be necessary. You will probably be acquitted. Everybody says so, and a great many people believe in you. And then you will begin life again. No one shall know

that I have talked to you, and you must promise me that you will talk to no one else. Do not see another reporter."

She smiled ironically at this stipulation of her own. "He might be more loyal than I," she thought.

"I will do just as you say," said the other woman. She did not understand the sacrifice, but she knew what the decision meant to her. She dipped a towel in water and bathed her face and eyes. Then she took the newspaperwoman's hands in her own and kissed them almost shyly.

"Thank you," she said. "Thank you very much."

The key turned noisily in the lock, and the reporter passed out. She went back to whisper one more warning. "Do not let them put you on the stand."

She heard the door clang, and the key turn, as she walked toward the warden's office.

"That's good," she murmured in grim self-abasement. "In another moment I should probably have been helping her through the window."

"So Mrs. Brandow has been acquitted," said the managing editor of the *Searchlight* to an assistant, as the news came in two weeks later. "And the whole country is shedding tears of joy over her, and they're having bonfires tonight up in Fairview. I believe she's guilty; but a pretty woman who can hold her tongue will escape the consequences of almost any crime. Strange how Miss Herrick failed on that case; she felt it, too. Has been working day and night ever since, and all that sort of thing. But, after all, you can't depend on a woman in this business."

The managing editor was more nearly right than he knew.

Mrs. Manstey's View



EDITH WHARTON

THE VIEW FROM Mrs. Manstey's window was not a striking one, but to her at least it was full of interest and beauty. Mrs. Manstey occupied the back room on the third floor of a New York boardinghouse, in a street where the ash barrels lingered late on the sidewalk and the gaps in the pavement would have staggered a Quintus Curtius. She was the widow of a clerk in a large wholesale house, and his death had left her alone, for her only daughter had married in California, and could not afford the long journey to New York to see her mother. Mrs. Manstey, perhaps, might have joined her daughter in the West, but they had now been so many years apart that they had ceased to feel any need of each other's society, and their intercourse had long been limited to the exchange of a few perfunctory letters, written with indifference by the daughter, and with difficulty by Mrs. Manstey, whose right hand was growing stiff with gout. Even had she felt a stronger desire for her daughter's companionship, Mrs. Manstey's increasing infirmity, which caused her to dread the three flights of stairs between her room and the street, would have given her pause on the eve of undertaking so long a journey; and without perhaps formulating these reasons she had long since accepted as a matter of course her solitary life in New York.

She was, indeed, not quite lonely, for a few friends still toiled up now and then to her room; but their visits grew rare as the years went by. Mrs. Manstey had never been a sociable woman, and during her husband's lifetime his companionship had been all-sufficient to her. For many years she had cherished a desire to live in the country, to have a henhouse and a garden; but this longing had faded with age, leaving only in the breast of the uncommunicative old woman a vague tenderness for plants and animals. It was, perhaps, this tenderness which made her cling so fervently to her view from her window, a view in which the most optimistic eye would at first have failed to discover anything admirable.

Mrs. Manstey, from her coign of vantage (a slightly projecting bow window where she nursed an ivy and a succession of unwholesome-looking bulbs), looked out first upon the yard of her own dwelling, of which, however, she could get but a restricted glimpse. Still, her gaze took in the topmost boughs of the ailanthus below her window, and she knew how early each year the clump of dicentra strung its bending stalk with hearts of pink.

But of greater interest were the yards beyond. Being for the most part attached to boardinghouses they were in a state of chronic untidiness and fluttering, on certain days of the week, with miscellaneous garments and frayed tablecloths. In spite of this Mrs. Manstey found much to admire in the long vista which she commanded. Some of the yards were, indeed, but stony wastes, with grass in the cracks of the pavement and no shade in spring save that afforded by the intermittent leafage of the clotheslines. These yards Mrs. Manstey disapproved of, but the others, the green ones, she loved. She had grown used to their disorder; the broken barrels, the empty bottles and paths unswept no longer annoyed her; hers was the happy faculty of dwelling on the pleasanter side of the prospect before her.

In the very next enclosure did not a magnolia open its hard white flowers against the watery blue of April? And was there not, a little way down the line, a fence foamed over every May by lilac waves of wisteria? Farther still, a horse chestnut lifted its candelabra of buff and pink blossoms above broad fans of foliage; while in the opposite yard June was sweet with the breath of a neglected syringa, which persisted in growing in spite of the countless obstacles opposed to its welfare.

But if nature occupied the front rank in Mrs. Manstey's view, there was much of a more personal character to interest her in the aspect of the houses and their inmates. She deeply disapproved of the mustard-colored curtains which had lately been hung in the doctor's window opposite; but she glowed with pleasure when the house farther down

had its old bricks washed with a coat of paint. The occupants of the houses did not often show themselves at the back windows, but the servants were always in sight. Noisy slatterns, Mrs. Manstey pronounced the greater number; she knew their ways and hated them. But to the quiet cook in the newly painted house, whose mistress bullied her, and who secretly fed the stray cats at nightfall, Mrs. Manstey's warmest sympathies were given. On one occasion her feelings were racked by the neglect of a housemaid, who for two days forgot to feed the parrot committed to her care. On the third day, Mrs. Manstey, in spite of her gouty hand, had just penned a letter, beginning: "Madam, it is now three days since your parrot has been fed," when the forgetful maid appeared at the window with a cup of seed in her hand.

But in Mrs. Manstey's more meditative moods it was the narrowing perspective of far-off yards which pleased her best. She loved, at twilight, when the distant brownstone spire seemed melting in the fluid yellow of the west, to lose herself in vague memories of a trip to Europe, made years ago, and now reduced in her mind's eye to a pale phantasmagoria of indistinct steeples and dreamy skies. Perhaps at heart Mrs. Manstey was an artist; at all events she was sensible of many changes of color unnoticed by the average eye and, dear to her as the green of early spring was, the black lattice of branches against a cold sulphur sky at the close of a snowy day. She enjoyed, also, the sunny thaws of March, when patches of earth showed through the snow, like ink spots spreading on a sheet of white blotting paper; and, better still, the haze of boughs, leafless but swollen, which replaced the clear-cut tracery of winter. She even watched with a certain interest the trail of smoke from a far-off factory chimney, and missed a detail in the landscape when the factory was closed and the smoke disappeared.

Mrs. Manstey, in the long hours which she spent at her window, was not idle. She read a little, and knitted numberless stockings; but the view surrounded and shaped her life as the sea does a lonely island. When her rare callers came it was difficult for her to detach herself from the contemplation of the opposite window washing, or the scrutiny of certain green points in a neighboring flower bed which might, or might not, turn into hyacinths, while she feigned an interest in her visitor's anecdotes about some unknown grandchild. Mrs. Manstey's real friends were the denizens of the yards, the hyacinths, the magnolia, the green parrot, the maid who fed the cats, the doctor who studied late behind his mustard-colored curtains; and the confidant of her tenderer musings was the church spire floating in the sunset.

One April day, as she sat in her usual place, with knitting cast aside and eyes fixed on the blue sky mottled with round clouds, a knock

at the door announced the entrance of her landlady. Mrs. Manstey did not care for her landlady, but she submitted to her visits with lady-like resignation. Today, however, it seemed harder than usual to turn from the blue sky and the blossoming magnolia to Mrs. Sampson's unsuggestive face, and Mrs. Manstey was conscious of a distinct effort as she did so.

"The magnolia is out earlier than usual this year, Mrs. Sampson," she remarked, yielding to a rare impulse, for she seldom alluded to the absorbing interest of her life. In the first place it was a topic not likely to appeal to her visitors and, besides, she lacked the power of expression and could not have given utterance to her feelings had she wished to.

"The what, Mrs. Manstey?" inquired the landlady, glancing about the room as if to find there the explanation of Mrs. Manstey's statement.

"The magnolia in the next yard—in Mrs. Black's yard," Mrs. Manstey repeated.

"Is it, indeed? I didn't know there was a magnolia there," said Mrs. Sampson, carelessly. Mrs. Manstey looked at her; she did not know that there was a magnolia in the next yard!

"By the way," Mrs. Sampson continued, "speaking of Mrs. Black reminds me that the work on the extension is to begin next week."

"The what?" it was Mrs. Manstey's turn to ask.

"The extension," said Mrs. Sampson, nodding her head in the direction of the ignored magnolia. "You knew, of course, that Mrs. Black was going to build an extension to her house? Yes, ma'am. I hear it is to run right back to the end of the yard. How she can afford to build an extension in these hard times I don't see; but she always was crazy about building. She used to keep a boardinghouse in Seventeenth Street, and she nearly ruined herself then by sticking out bow windows and what not; I should have thought that would have cured her of building, but I guess it's a disease, like drink. Anyhow, the work is to begin on Monday."

Mrs. Manstey had grown pale. She always spoke slowly, so the landlady did not heed the long pause which followed. At last Mrs. Manstey said: "Do you know how high the extension will be?"

"That's the most absurd part of it. The extension is to be built right up to the roof of the main building; now, did you ever?"

Mrs. Manstey paused again. "Won't it be a great annoyance to you, Mrs. Sampson?" she asked.

"I should say it would. But there's no help for it; if people have got a mind to build extensions there's no law to prevent 'em, that I'm aware of." Mrs. Manstey, knowing this, was silent. "There is no help for it,"

Mrs. Sampson repeated, "but if I *am* a church member, I wouldn't be so sorry if it ruined Eliza Black. Well, good day, Mrs. Manstey; I'm glad to find you so comfortable."

So comfortable—so comfortable! Left to herself the old woman turned once more to the window. How lovely the view was that day! The blue sky with its round clouds shed a brightness over everything; the ailanthus had put on a tinge of yellow-green, the hyacinths were budding, the magnolia flowers looked more than ever like rosettes carved in alabaster. Soon the wisteria would bloom, then the horse chestnut; but not for her. Between her eyes and them a barrier of brick and mortar would swiftly rise; presently even the spire would disappear, and all her radiant world be blotted out. Mrs. Manstey sent away untouched the dinner tray brought to her that evening. She lingered in the window until the windy sunset died in bat-colored dusk; then, going to bed, she lay sleepless all night.

Early the next day she was up and at the window. It was raining, but even through the slanting gray gauze the scene had its charm—and then the rain was so good for the trees. She had noticed the day before that the ailanthus was growing dusty.

"Of course I might move," said Mrs. Manstey aloud, and turning from the window she looked about her room. She might move, of course; so might she be flayed alive; but she was not likely to survive either operation. The room, though far less important to her happiness than the view, was as much a part of her existence. She had lived in it seventeen years. She knew every stain on the wallpaper, every rent in the carpet; the light fell in a certain way on her engravings, her books had grown shabby on their shelves, her bulbs and ivy were used to their window and knew which way to lean to the sun. "We are all too old to move," she said.

That afternoon it cleared. Wet and radiant the blue reappeared through torn rags of cloud; the ailanthus sparkled; the earth in the flower borders looked rich and warm. It was Thursday, and on Monday the building of the extension was to begin.

On Sunday afternoon a card was brought to Mrs. Black, as she was engaged in gathering up the fragments of the boarders' dinner in the basement. The card, black-edged, bore Mrs. Manstey's name.

"One of Mrs. Sampson's boarders; wants to move, I suppose. Well, I can give her a room next year in the extension. Dinah," said Mrs. Black, "tell the lady I'll be upstairs in a minute."

Mrs. Black found Mrs. Manstey standing in the long parlor garished with statuettes and antimacassars; in that house she could not sit down.

Stooping hurriedly to open the register, which let out a cloud of dust, Mrs. Black advanced to her visitor.

"I'm happy to meet you, Mrs. Manstey; take a seat, please," the landlady remarked in her prosperous voice, the voice of a woman who can afford to build extensions. There was no help for it; Mrs. Manstey sat down.

"Is there anything I can do for you, ma'am?" Mrs. Black continued. "My house is full at present, but I am going to build an extension, and—"

"It is about the extension that I wish to speak," said Mrs. Manstey, suddenly. "I am a poor woman, Mrs. Black, and I have never been a happy one. I shall have to talk about myself first to—to make you understand."

Mrs. Black, astonished but imperturbable, bowed at this parenthesis.

"I never had what I wanted," Mrs. Manstey continued. "It was always one disappointment after another. For years I wanted to live in the country. I dreamed and dreamed about it; but we never could manage it. There was no sunny window in our house, and so all my plants died. My daughter married years ago and went away—besides, she never cared for the same things. Then my husband died and I was left alone. That was seventeen years ago. I went to live at Mrs. Sampson's and I have been there ever since. I have grown a little infirm, as you see, and I don't get out often; only on fine days, if I am feeling very well. So you can understand my sitting a great deal in my window—the back window on the third floor—"

"Well, Mrs. Manstey," said Mrs. Black, liberally, "I could give you a back room, I dare say; one of the new rooms in the ex—"

"But I don't want to move; I can't move," said Mrs. Manstey, almost with a scream. "And I came to tell you that if you build that extension I shall have no view from my window—no view! Do you understand?"

Mrs. Black thought herself face to face with a lunatic, and she had always heard that lunatics must be humored.

"Dear me, dear me," she remarked, pushing her chair back a little way, "that is too bad, isn't it? Why, I never thought of that. To be sure, the extension *will* interfere with your view, Mrs. Manstey."

"You do understand?" Mrs. Manstey gasped.

"Of course I do. And I'm real sorry about it, too. But there, don't you worry, Mrs. Manstey. I guess we can fix that all right."

Mrs. Manstey rose from her seat, and Mrs. Black slipped toward the door.

"What do you mean by fixing it? Do you mean that I can induce you to change your mind about the extension? Oh, Mrs. Black, listen to me. I have two thousand dollars in the bank and I could manage, I know I could manage, to give you a thousand if—" Mrs. Manstey paused; the tears were rolling down her cheeks.

"There, there, Mrs. Manstey, don't you worry," repeated Mrs. Black, soothingly. "I am sure we can settle it. I am sorry that I can't stay and talk about it any longer, but this is such a busy time of day, with supper to get—"

Her hand was on the doorknob, but with sudden vigor Mrs. Manstey seized her wrist.

"You are not giving me a definite answer. Do you mean to say that you accept my proposition?"

"Why, I'll think it over, Mrs. Manstey, certainly I will. I wouldn't annoy you for the world—"

"But the work is to begin tomorrow, I am told," Mrs. Manstey persisted.

Mrs. Black hesitated. "It shan't begin, I promise you that; I'll send word to the builder this very night." Mrs. Manstey tightened her hold.

"You are not deceiving me, are you?" she said.

"No—no," stammered Mrs. Black. "How can you think such a thing of me, Mrs. Manstey?"

Slowly Mrs. Manstey's clutch relaxed, and she passed through the open door. "One thousand dollars," she repeated, pausing in the hall; then she let herself out of the house and hobbled down the steps, supporting herself on the cast-iron railing.

"My goodness," exclaimed Mrs. Black, shutting and bolting the hall door, "I never knew the old woman was crazy! And she looks so quiet and ladylike, too."

Mrs. Manstey slept well that night, but early the next morning she was awakened by a sound of hammering. She got to her window with what haste she might and, looking out, saw that Mrs. Black's yard was full of workmen. Some were carrying loads of brick from the kitchen to the yard, others beginning to demolish the old-fashioned wooden balcony which adorned each story of Mrs. Black's house. Mrs. Manstey saw that she had been deceived. At first she thought of confiding her trouble to Mrs. Sampson, but a settled discouragement soon took possession of her and she went back to bed, not caring to see what was going on.

Toward afternoon, however, feeling that she must know the worst, she rose and dressed herself. It was a laborious task, for her hands were stiffer than usual, and the hooks and buttons seemed to evade her.

When she seated herself in the window, she saw that the workmen had removed the upper part of the balcony, and that the bricks had multiplied since morning. One of the men, a coarse fellow with a bloated face, picked a magnolia blossom and, after smelling it, threw it to the ground; the next man, carrying a load of bricks, trod on the flower in passing.

"Look out, Jim," called one of the men to another who was smoking a pipe, "if you throw matches around near those barrels of paper you'll have the old tinderbox burning down before you know it." And Mrs. Manstey, leaning forward, perceived that there were several barrels of paper and rubbish under the wooden balcony.

At length the work ceased and twilight fell. The sunset was perfect and a roseate light, transfiguring the distant spire, lingered late in the west. When it grew dark Mrs. Manstey drew down the shades and proceeded, in her usual methodical manner, to light her lamp. She always filled it and lit it with her own hands, keeping a kettle of kerosene on a zinc-covered shelf in a closet. As the lamplight filled the room it assumed its usual peaceful aspect. The books and pictures and plants seemed, like their mistress, to settle themselves down for another quiet evening, and Mrs. Manstey, as was her wont, drew up her arm-chair to the table and began to knit.

That night she could not sleep. The weather had changed and a wild wind was abroad, blotting the stars with close-driven clouds. Mrs. Manstey rose once or twice and looked out of the window; but of the view nothing was discernible save a tardy light or two in the opposite windows. These lights at last went out, and Mrs. Manstey, who had watched for their extinction, began to dress herself. She was in evident haste, for she merely flung a thin dressing gown over her nightdress and wrapped her head in a scarf; then she opened her closet and cautiously took out the kettle of kerosene. Having slipped a bundle of wooden matches into her pocket she proceeded, with increasing precautions, to unlock her door, and a few moments later she was feeling her way down the dark staircase, led by a glimmer of gas from the lower hall. At length she reached the bottom of the stairs and began the more difficult descent into the utter darkness of the basement. Here, however, she could move more freely, as there was less danger of being overheard; and without much delay she contrived to unlock the iron door leading into the yard. A gust of cold wind smote her as she stepped out and groped shiveringly under the clotheslines.

That morning at three o'clock an alarm of fire brought the engines to Mrs. Black's door, and also brought Mrs. Sampson's startled boarders to their windows. The wooden balcony at the back of Mrs. Black's

house was ablaze, and among those who watched the progress of the flames was Mrs. Manstey, leaning in her thin dressing gown from the open window.

The fire, however, was soon put out, and the frightened occupants of the house, who had fled in scant attire, reassembled at dawn to find that little mischief had been done beyond the cracking of windowpanes and smoking of ceilings. In fact, the chief sufferer by the fire was Mrs. Manstey, who was found in the morning gasping with pneumonia, a not unnatural result, as everyone remarked, of her having hung out of an open window at her age in a dressing gown. It was easy to see that she was very ill, but no one had guessed how grave the doctor's verdict would be, and the faces gathered that evening about Mrs. Sampson's table were awestruck and disturbed. Not that any of the boarders knew Mrs. Manstey well; she "kept to herself," as they said, and seemed to fancy herself too good for them; but then it is always disagreeable to have anyone dying in the house and, as one lady observed to another: "It might just as well have been you or me, my dear."

But it was only Mrs. Manstey; and she was dying, as she had lived, lonely if not alone. The doctor had sent a trained nurse, and Mrs. Sampson, with muffled step, came in from time to time; but both, to Mrs. Manstey, seemed remote and unsubstantial as the figures in a dream. All day she said nothing; but when she was asked for her daughter's address she shook her head. At times the nurse noticed that she seemed to be listening attentively for some sound which did not come; then again she dozed.

The next morning at daylight she was very low. The nurse called Mrs. Sampson and as the two bent over the old woman they saw her lips move.

"Lift me up—out of bed," she whispered.

They raised her in their arms, and with her stiff hand she pointed to the window.

"Oh, the window—she wants to sit in the window. She used to sit there all day," Mrs. Sampson explained. "It can do her no harm, I suppose?"

"Nothing matters now," said the nurse.

They carried Mrs. Manstey to the window and placed her in her chair. The dawn was abroad, a jubilant spring dawn; the spire had already caught a golden ray, though the magnolia and horse chestnut still slumbered in shadow. In Mrs. Black's yard all was quiet. The charred timbers of the balcony lay where they had fallen. It was evident that since the fire the builders had not returned to their work. The magnolia had unfolded a few more sculptural flowers; the view was undisturbed.

It was hard for Mrs. Manstey to breathe; each moment it grew more difficult. She tried to make them open the window, but they would not understand. If she could have tasted the air, sweet with the penetrating ailanthus savor, it would have eased her; but the view at least was there—the spire was golden now, the heavens had warmed from pearl to blue, day was alight from east to west, even the magnolia had caught the sun.

Mrs. Manstey's head fell back and smiling she died.

That day the building of the extension was resumed.

How I Went Out to Service



LOUISA MAY ALCOTT



WHEN I WAS EIGHTEEN I wanted something to do. I had tried teaching for two years, and hated it; I had tried sewing, and could not earn my bread in that way, at the cost of health; I tried story-writing and got five dollars for stories which now bring a hundred; I had thought seriously of going upon the stage, but certain highly respectable relatives were so shocked at the mere idea that I relinquished my dramatic aspirations.

"What *shall* I do?" was still the question that perplexed me. I was ready to work, eager to be independent, and too proud to endure patronage. But the right task seemed hard to find, and my bottled energies were fermenting in a way that threatened an explosion before long.

My honored mother was a city missionary that winter, and not only served the clamorous poor, but often found it in her power to help decayed gentlefolk by quietly placing them where they could earn their bread without the entire sacrifice of taste and talent which makes poverty so hard for such to bear. Knowing her tact and skill, people often came to her for companions, housekeepers, and that class of the needy who do not make their wants known through an intelligence office.

One day, as I sat dreaming splendid dreams, while I made a series of little petticoats out of the odds and ends sent in for the poor, a tall,

ministerial gentleman appeared, in search of a companion for his sister. He possessed an impressive nose, a fine flow of language, and a pair of large hands, encased in black kid gloves. With much waving of these somber members, Mr. R. set forth the delights awaiting the happy soul who should secure this home. He described it as a sort of heaven on earth. "There are books, pictures, flowers, a piano, and the best of society," he said. "This person will be one of the family in all respects, and only required to help about the lighter work, which my sister has done herself hitherto, but is now a martyr to neuralgia and needs a gentle friend to assist her."

My mother, who never lost her faith in human nature, in spite of many impostures, believed every word, and quite beamed with benevolent interest as she listened and tried to recall some needy young woman to whom this charming home would be a blessing. I also innocently thought:

"That sounds inviting. I like housework and can do it well. I should have time to enjoy the books and things I love, and D—is not far away from home. Suppose I try it."

So, when my mother turned to me, asking if I could suggest anyone, I became as red as a poppy and said abruptly:

"Only myself."

"Do you really mean it?" cried my astonished parent.

"I really do if Mr. R. thinks I should suit," was my steady reply, as I partially obscured my crimson countenance behind a little flannel skirt, still redder.

The Reverend Josephus gazed upon me with the benign regard which a bachelor of five and thirty may accord a bashful damsel of eighteen. A smile dawned upon his countenance, "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," or dyspepsia; and he softly folded the black gloves, as if about to bestow a blessing as he replied, with emphasis:

"I am sure you would, and we should think ourselves most fortunate if we could secure your society, and—ahem—services for my poor sister."

"Then I'll try it," responded the impetuous maid.

"We will talk it over a little first, and let you know tomorrow, sir," put in my prudent parent, adding, as Mr. R. arose: "What wages do you pay?"

"My dear madam, in a case like this let me not use such words as those. Anything you may think proper we shall gladly give. The labor is very light, for there are but three of us and our habits are of the simplest sort. I am a frail reed and may break at any moment; so is my sister, and my aged father cannot long remain; therefore, money is little

to us, and anyone who comes to lend her youth and strength to our feeble household will not be forgotten in the end, I assure you." And, with another pensive smile, a farewell wave of the impressive gloves, the Reverend Josephus bowed like a well-sweep and departed.

"My dear, are you in earnest?" asked my mother.

"Of course, I am. Why not try this experiment? It can but fail, like all the others."

"I have no objection; only I fancied you were rather too proud for this sort of thing."

"I am too proud to be idle and dependent, ma'am. I'll scrub floors and take in washing first. I do housework at home for love; why not do it abroad for money? I like it better than teaching. It is healthier than sewing and surer than writing. So why not try it?"

"It is going out to service, you know, though you are called a companion. How does that suit?"

"I don't care. Every sort of work that is paid for is service; and I don't mind being a companion, if I can do it well. I may find it is my mission to take care of neuralgic old ladies and lackadaisical clergymen. It does not sound exciting, but it's better than nothing," I answered, with a sigh; for it *was* rather a sudden downfall to give up being a Siddons and become a Betcinder.

How my sisters laughed when they heard the new plan! But they soon resigned themselves, sure of fun, for Lu's adventures were the standing joke of the family. Of course, the highly respectable relatives held up their hands in holy horror at the idea of one of the clan degrading herself by going out to service. Teaching a private school was the proper thing for an indigent gentlewoman. Sewing even, if done in the seclusion of home and not mentioned in public, could be tolerated. Story-writing was a genteel accomplishment and reflected credit upon the name. But leaving the paternal roof to wash other people's teacups, nurse other people's ails, and obey other people's orders for hire—this, this was degradation; and headstrong Louisa would disgrace her name forever if she did it.

Opposition only fired the revolutionary blood in my veins, and I crowned my iniquity by the rebellious declaration:

"If doing this work hurts my respectability, I wouldn't give much for it. My aristocratic ancestors don't feed or clothe me and my democratic ideas of honesty and honor won't let me be idle or dependent. You need not know me if you are ashamed of me, and I won't ask you for a penny; so, if I never do succeed in anything, I shall have the immense satisfaction of knowing I am under no obligation to anyone."

In spite of the laughter and the lamentation, I got ready my small wardrobe, consisting of two calico dresses and one delaine, made by myself, also several large and uncompromising blue aprons and three tidy little sweeping caps; for I had some English notions about housework and felt that my muslin hair-protectors would be useful in some of the "light labors" I was to undertake. It is needless to say they were very becoming. Then, firmly embracing my family, I set forth, one cold January day, with my little trunk, a stout heart, and a five-dollar bill for my fortune.

"She will be back in a week," was my sister's prophecy, as she wiped her weeping eye.

"No, she won't, for she has promised to stay the month out and she will keep her word," answered my mother, who always defended the black sheep of her flock.

I heard both speeches, and registered a tremendous vow to keep that promise, if I died in the attempt—little dreaming, poor innocent, what lay before me.

Josephus meantime had written me several remarkable letters, describing the different members of the family I was about to enter. His account was peculiar, but I believed every word of it and my romantic fancy was much excited by the details he gave. The principal ones are as follows, condensed from the voluminous epistles which he evidently enjoyed writing:

"You will find a stately mansion, fast falling to decay, for my father will have nothing repaired, preferring that the old house and its master should crumble away together. I have, however, been permitted to rescue a few rooms from ruin; and here I pass my recluse life, surrounded by the things I love. This will naturally be more attractive to you than the gloomy apartments my father inhabits, and I hope you will here allow me to minister to your young and cheerful nature when your daily cares are over. I need such companionship and shall always welcome you to my abode.

"Eliza, my sister, is a child at forty, for she has lived alone with my father and an old servant all her life. She is a good creature, but not lively, and needs stirring up, as you will soon see. Also I hope by your means to rescue her from the evil influence of Puah, who, in my estimation, is a *wretch*. She has gained entire control over Eliza, and warps her mind with great skill, prejudicing her against *me* and thereby desolating my home. Puah hates *me* and always has. Why I know not, except that I will not yield to her control. She ruled here for years while I was away, and my return upset all her nefarious plans. It will always be my firm opinion that she has tried to *poison me*, and may again. But

even this dark suspicion will not deter me from my duty. I cannot send her away, for both my deluded father and my sister have entire faith in her, and I cannot shake it. She is faithful and kind to them, so I submit and remain to guard them, even at the risk of my life.

"I tell you these things because I wish you to know all and be warned, for this old hag has a specious tongue, and I should grieve to see you deceived by her lies. Say nothing, but watch her silently, and help me to thwart her evil plots; but do not trust her, or beware."

Now this was altogether romantic and sensational, and I felt as if about to enter one of those delightfully dangerous houses we read of in novels, where perils, mysteries, and sins freely disport themselves, till the newcomer sets all to rights, after unheard-of trials and escapes.

I arrived at twilight, just the proper time for the heroine to appear; and, as no one answered my modest solo on the rusty knocker, I walked in and looked about me. Yes, here was the long, shadowy hall, where the ghosts doubtless walked at midnight. Peering in at an open door on the right, I saw a parlor full of ancient furniture, faded, dusty, and dilapidated. Old portraits stared at me from the walls and a damp child froze the marrow of my bones in the most approved style.

"The romance opens well," I thought, and, peeping in at an opposite door, beheld a luxurious apartment, full of the warm glow of firelight, the balmy breath of hyacinths and roses, the white glimmer of piano keys, and tempting rows of books along the walls.

The contrast between the two rooms was striking, and, after an admiring survey, I continued my explorations, thinking that I should not mind being "ministered to" in that inviting place when my work was done.

A third door showed me a plain, dull sitting room, with an old man napping in his easy chair. I heard voices in the kitchen beyond, and, entering there, beheld Puah the fiend. Unfortunately, for the dramatic effect of the tableaux, all I saw was a mild-faced old woman, buttering toast, while she conversed with her familiar, a comfortable gray cat.

The old lady greeted me kindly, but I fancied her faded blue eye had a weird expression and her amiable words were all a snare, though I own I was rather disappointed at the commonplace appearance of this humble Borgia.

She showed me to a tiny room, where I felt more like a young giantess than ever, and was obliged to stow away my possessions as snugly as in a ship's cabin. When I presently descended, armed with a blue apron and "a heart for any fate," I found the old man awake and received from him a welcome full of ancient courtesy and kindness. Miss Eliza crept in like a timid mouse, looking so afraid of her buxom

companion that I forgot my own shyness in trying to relieve hers. She was so enveloped in shawls that all I could discover was that my mistress was a very nervous little woman, with a small button of pale hair on the outside of her head and the vaguest notions of work inside. A few spasmodic remarks and many awkward pauses brought me to teatime, when Josephus appeared, as tall, thin, and cadaverous as ever. After his arrival there was no more silence, for he preached all suppertime something in this agreeable style.

"My young friend, our habits, as you see, are of the simplest. We eat in the kitchen, and all together, in the primitive fashion; for it suits my father and saves labor. I could wish more order and elegance; but *my* wishes are not consulted and I submit. I live above these petty crosses, and, though my health suffers from bad cookery, I do not murmur. Only, I must say, in passing, that if you *will* make your battercakes green with saleratus, Puah, I shall feel it my duty to throw them out of the window. *I* am used to poison; but I cannot see the coals of this blooming girl's stomach destroyed, as mine have been. And, speaking of duties, I may as well mention to you, Louisa (I call you so in a truly fraternal spirit), that I like to find my study in order when I come down in the morning; for I often need a few moments of solitude before I face the daily annoyances of my life. I shall permit *you* to perform this light task, for *you* have some idea of order (I see it in the formation of your brow), and feel sure that *you* will respect the sanctuary of thought. Eliza is so blind she does not see dust, and Puah enjoys devastating the one poor refuge I can call my own this side the grave. We are all waiting for you, sir. My father keeps up the old formalities, you observe; and I endure them, though *my* views are more advanced."

The old gentleman hastily finished his tea and returned thanks, when his son stalked gloomily away, evidently oppressed with the burden of his wrongs, also, as I irreverently fancied, with the seven "green" flapjacks he had devoured during the sermon.

I helped wash up the cups, and during that domestic rite Puah chatted in what I should have considered a cheery, social way had I not been darkly warned against her wiles.

"You needn't mind half Josephus says, my dear. He likes to hear himself talk and always goes on so before folks. I sometimes thinks his books and new ideas have sort of muddled his wits, for he is as full of notions as a paper is of pins; and he gets dreadfully put out if we don't give in to 'em. But, gracious me! they are so redicklus sometimes and so selfish I can't allow him to make a fool of himself or plague Lizy. She don't dare to say her soul is her own; so I have to stand up for her. His

pa don't know half his odd doings; for I try to keep the old gentleman comfortable and have to manage 'em all, which is not an easy job I do assure you."

I had a secret conviction that she was right, but did not commit myself in any way, and we joined the social circle in the sitting room. The prospect was not a lively one, for the old gentleman nodded behind his newspaper; Eliza, with her head pinned up in a little blanket, slumbered on the sofa; Puah fell to knitting silently; and the plump cat dozed under the stove. Josephus was visible, artistically posed in the luxurious recesses of his cell, with the light beaming on his thoughtful brow, as he pored over a large volume or mused with upturned eye.

Having nothing else to do, I sat and stared at him, till, emerging from a deep reverie, with an effective start, he became conscious of my existence and beckoned me to approach the "sanctuary of thought" with a dramatic waft of his large hand.

I went, took possession of an easy chair, and prepared myself for elegant conversation. I was disappointed, however; for Josephus showed me a list of his favorite dishes, sole fruit of all that absorbing thought, and, with an earnestness that flushed his saffron countenance, gave me hints as to the proper preparation of these delicacies.

I mildly mentioned that I was not a cook; but was effectually silenced by being reminded that I came to be generally useful, to take his sister's place, and see that the flame of life which burned so feebly in this earthly tabernacle was fed with proper fuel. Mince pies, Welsh rarebits, sausages, and strong coffee did not strike me as strictly spiritual fare; but I listened meekly and privately resolved to shift this awful responsibility to Puah's shoulders.

Detecting me in gape, after an hour of this high converse, he presented me with an overblown rose, which fell to pieces before I got out of the room, pressed my hand, and dismissed me with a fervent "God bless you, child. Don't forget the dropped eggs for breakfast."

I was up betimes next morning and had the study in perfect order before the recluse appeared, enjoying a good prowling among the books as I worked and becoming so absorbed that I forgot the eggs, till a gusty sigh startled me, and I beheld Josephus, in dressing gown and slippers, languidly surveying the scene.

"Nay, do not fly," he said, as I grasped my duster in guilty haste. "It pleases me to see you here and lends a sweet, domestic charm to my solitary room. I like that graceful cap, that housewifely apron, and I beg you to wear them often; for it refreshes my eye to see something tasteful, young, and womanly about me. Eliza makes a bundle of herself and Puah is simply detestable."

He sank languidly into a chair and closed his eyes, as if the mere thought of his enemy was too much for him. I took advantage of this momentary prostration to slip away, convulsed with laughter at the looks and words of this bald-headed sentimentalist.

After breakfast I fell to work with a will, eager to show my powers and glad to put things to rights, for many hard jobs had evidently been waiting for a stronger arm than Puah's and a more methodical head than Eliza's.

Everything was dusty, moldy, shiftless, and neglected, except the domain of Josephus. Upstairs the paper was dropping from the walls, the ancient furniture was all more or less dilapidated, and every hold and corner was full of relics tucked away by Puah, who was a regular old magpie. Rats and mice reveled in the empty rooms and spiders wove their tapestry undisturbed, for the old man would have nothing altered or repaired and his part of the house was fast going to ruin.

I longed to have a grand "clearing up"; but was forbidden to do more than to keep things in livable order. On the whole, it was fortunate, for I soon found that my hands would be kept busy with the realms of Josephus, whose ethereal being shrank from dust, shivered at a cold breath, and needed much cossetting with dainty food, hot fires, soft beds, and endless service, else, as he expressed it, the frail reed would break.

I regret to say that a time soon came when I felt supremely indifferent as to the breakage, and very skeptical as to the fragility of a reed that ate, slept, dawdled, and scolded so energetically. The rose that fell to pieces so suddenly was a good symbol of the rapid disappearance of all the romantic delusions I had indulged in for a time. A week's acquaintance with the inmates of this old house quite settled my opinion, and further developments only confirmed it.

Miss Eliza was a nonentity and made no more impression on me than a fly. The old gentleman passed his days in a placid sort of doze and took no notice of what went on about him. Puah had been a faithful drudge for years, and, instead of being a "wretch," was, as I soon satisfied myself, a motherly old soul, with no malice in her. The secret of Josephus's dislike was that the reverend tyrant ruled the house, and all obeyed him but Puah, who had nursed him as a baby, boxed his ears as a boy, and was not afraid of him even when he became a man and a minister. I soon repented of my first suspicions, and grew fond of her, for without my old gossip I should have fared ill when my day of tribulation came.

At first I innocently accepted the fraternal invitations to visit the study, feeling that when my day's work was done I earned a right to rest

and read. But I soon found that this was not the idea. I was not to read; but to be read to. I was not to enjoy the flowers, pictures, fire, and books; but to keep them in order for my lord to enjoy. I was also to be a passive bucket, into which he was to pour all manner of philosophic, metaphysical, and sentimental rubbish. I was to serve his needs, soothe his sufferings, and sympathize with all his sorrows—be a galley slave, in fact.

As soon as I clearly understood this, I tried to put an end to it by shunning the study and never lingering there an instant after my work was done. But it availed little, for Josephus demanded much sympathy and was bound to have it. So he came and read poems while I washed dishes, discussed his pet problems all meal-times, and put reproachful notes under my door, in which were comically mingled complaints of neglect and orders for dinner.

I bore it as long as I could, and then freed my mind in a declaration of independence, delivered in the kitchen, where he found me scrubbing the hearth. It was not an impressive attitude for an orator, nor was the occupation one a girl would choose when receiving calls; but I have always felt grateful for the intense discomfort of that moment, since it gave me the courage to rebel outright. Stranded on a small island of mat, in a sea of soapsuds, I brandished a scrubbing brush, as I indignantly informed him that I came to be a companion to his sister, not to him, and I should keep that post or none. This I followed up by reproaching him with the delusive reports he had given me of the place and its duties, and assuring him that I should not stay long unless matters mended.

“But I offer you lighter tasks, and you refuse them,” he began, still hovering in the doorway, whither he had hastily retired when I opened my batteries.

“But I don’t like the tasks, and consider them much worse than hard work,” was my ungrateful answer, as I sat upon my island, with the softsoap conveniently near.

“Do you mean to say you prefer to scrub the hearth to sitting in my charming room while I read Hegel to you?” he demanded, glaring down upon me.

“Infinitely,” I responded promptly, and emphasized my words by beginning to scrub with a zeal that made the bricks white with foam.

“Is it possible!” and, with a groan at my depravity, Josephus retired, full of ungodly wrath.

I remember that I immediately burst into jocund song, so that no doubt might remain in his mind, and continued to warble cheerfully till my task was done. I also remember that I cried heartily when I got to

my room, I was so vexed, disappointed, and tired. But my bower was so small I should soon have swamped the furniture if I had indulged copiously in tears; therefore I speedily dried them up, wrote a comic letter home, and waited with interest to see what would happen next.

Far be it from me to accuse one of the nobler sex of spite or the small revenge of underhand annoyances and slights to one who could not escape and would not retaliate; but after that day a curious change came over the spirit of that very unpleasant dream. Gradually all the work of the house had been slipping into my hands; for Eliza was too poorly to help and direct, and Puah too old to do much besides the cooking. About this time I found that even the roughest work was added to my share, for Josephus was unusually feeble and no one was hired to do his chores. Having made up my mind to go when the month was out, I said nothing, but dug paths, brought water from the well, split kindlings, made fires, and sifted ashes, like a true Cinderella.

There never had been any pretense of companionship with Eliza, who spent her days mulling over the fire, and seldom exerted herself except to find odd jobs for me to do—rusty knives to clean, sheets to turn, old stockings to mend, and, when all else failed, some paradise of moths and mice to be cleared up; for the house was full of such “glory holds.”

If I remonstrated, Eliza at once dissolved into tears and said she must do as she was told; Puah begged me to hold on till spring, when things would be much better; and pity pleaded for the two poor souls. But I don’t think I could have stood it if my promise had not bound me, for when the fiend said “Budge” honor said “Budge not” and I stayed.

But, being a mortal worm, I turned now and then when ireful Josephus trod upon me too hard, especially in the matter of boot-blackening. I really don’t know why that is considered such humiliating work for a woman; but so it is, and there I drew the line. I would have cleaned the old man’s shoes without a murmur; but he preferred to keep their native rustiness intact. Eliza never went out, and Puah affected carpet-slippers of the Chinese-junk pattern. Josephus, however, plumed himself upon his feet, which, like his nose, were large, and never took his walks abroad without having his boots in a high state of polish. He had brushed them himself at first; but soon after the explosion I discovered a pair of muddy boots in the shed, set suggestively near the blacking-box. I did not take the hint; feeling instinctively that this amiable being was trying how much I would bear for the sake of peace.

The boots remained untouched; and another pair soon came to keep them company, whereat I smiled wickedly as I chopped just kindlings enough for my own use. Day after day the collection grew,

and neither party gave in. Boots were succeeded by shoes, then rubbers gave a pleasing variety to the long line, and then I knew the end was near.

"Why are not my boots attended to?" demanded Josephus, one evening, when obliged to go out.

"I'm sure I don't know," was Eliza's helpless answer.

"I told Louizy I guessed you'd want some of 'em before long," observed Puah with an exasperating twinkle in her old eye.

"And what did she say?" asked my lord with an ireful whack of his velvet slippers as he cast them down.

"Oh! she said she was so busy doing your other work you'd have to do that yourself; and I thought she was about right."

"Louizy" heard it all through the slide, and could have embraced the old woman for her words, but kept still till Josephus had resumed his slippers with a growl and retired to the shed, leaving Eliza in tears, Puah chuckling, and the rebellious handmaid exulting in the china closet.

Alas! for romance and the Christian virtues, several pairs of boots were cleaned that night, and my sinful soul enjoyed the spectacle of the reverend bootblack at his task. I even found my "fancy work," as I called the evening job of pairing a bucketful of hard russets with a dull knife, much cheered by the shoe-brush accompaniment played in the shed.

Thunderclouds rested upon the martyr's brow at breakfast, and I was as much ignored as the cat. And what a relief that was! The piano was locked up, so were the bookcases, the newspapers mysteriously disappeared, and a solemn silence reigned at table, for no one dared to talk when that gifted tongue was mute. Eliza fled from the gathering storm and had a comfortable fit of neuralgia in her own room, where Puah nursed her, leaving me to skirmish with the enemy.

It was not a fair fight, and that experience lessened my respect for mankind immensely. I did my best, however—grubbed about all day and amused my dreary evenings as well as I could; too proud even to borrow a book, lest it should seem like a surrender. What a long month it was, and how eagerly I counted the hours of that last week, for my time was up Saturday and I hoped to be off at once. But when I announced my intention such dismay fell upon Eliza that my heart was touched, and Puah so urgently begged me to stay till they could get someone that I consented to remain a few days longer, and wrote posthaste to my mother, telling her to send a substitute quickly or I should do something desperate.

That blessed woman, little dreaming of all the woes I had endured, advised me to be patient, to do the generous thing, and be sure I should

not regret it in the end. I groaned, submitted, and did regret it all the days of my life.

Three mortal weeks I waited; for, though two other victims came, I was implored to set them going, and tried to do it. But both fled after a day or two, condemning the place as a very hard one and calling me a fool to stand it another hour. I entirely agreed with them on both points, and, when I had cleared up after the second incapable lady, I tarried not for the coming of a third, but clutched my property and announced my departure by the next train.

Of course, Eliza wept, Puah moaned, the old man politely regretted, and the younger one washed his hands of the whole affair by shutting himself up in his room and forbidding me to say farewell because "he could not bear it." I laughed, and fancied it done for effect then; but I soon understood it better and did not laugh.

At the last moment, Eliza nervously tucked a sixpenny pocketbook into my hand and shrouded herself in the little blanket with a sob. But Puah kissed me kindly and whispered, with an odd look: "Don't blame us for anything. Some folks is liberal and some ain't." I thanked the poor old soul for her kindness to me and trudged gaily away to the station, whither my property had preceded me on a wheelbarrow, hired at my own expense.

I never shall forget that day. A bleak March afternoon, a sloppy, lonely road, and one hoarse crow stalking about a field, so like Josephus that I could not resist throwing a snowball at him. Behind me stood the dull old house, no longer either mysterious or romantic in my disenchanted eyes; before me rumbled the barrow, bearing my dilapidated wardrobe; and in my pocket reposed what I fondly hoped was, if not a liberal, at least an honest return for seven weeks of the hardest work I ever did.

Unable to resist the desire to see what my earnings were, I opened the purse and beheld *four dollars*.

I have had a good many bitter minutes in my life; but one of the bitterest came to me as I stood there in the windy road, with the sixpenny pocketbook open before me, and looked from my poor chapped, grimy, chill-blained hands to the paltry sum that was considered reward enough for all the hard and humble labor they had done.

A girl's heart is a sensitive thing. And mine had been very full lately; for it had suffered many of the trials that wound deeply yet cannot be told; so I think it as but natural that my first impulse was to go straight back to that sacred study and fling this insulting money at the feet of him who sent it. But I was so boiling over with indignation

that I could not trust myself in his presence, lest I should be unable to resist the temptation to shake him, in spite of his cloth.

No, I would go home, show my honorable wounds, tell my pathetic tale, and leave my parents to avenge my wrongs. I did so; but over that harrowing scene I drop a veil, for my feeble pen refuses to depict the emotions of my outraged family. I will merely mention that the four dollars went back and the reverend Josephus never heard the last of it in that neighborhood.

My experiment seemed a dire failure and I mourned it as such for years; but more than once in my life I have been grateful for that seriocomic experience, since it has taught me many lessons. One of the most useful of these has been the power of successfully making a companion, not a servant, of those whose aid I need, and helping to gild their honest wages with the sympathy and justice which can sweeten the humblest and lighten the hardest task.

Marcia



REBECCA HARDING DAVIS



ONE WINTER MORNING a few years ago the mail brought me a roll of MS. (with one stamp too many, as if to bribe the post to care for so precious a thing) and a letter. Every publisher, editor, or even the obscurest of writers receives such packages so often as to know them at a glance. Half a dozen poems and a story—a blur of sunsets, duchesses, violets, bad French, and worse English; not a solid grain of common sense, not a hint of reality or even of possibility, in the whole of it. The letter—truth in every word: formal, hard, practical, and the meaning of it a woman's cry for bread for her hungry children. Each woman who writes such a letter fancies she is the first, that its pathos will move hard-hearted editors, and that the extent of her need will supply the lack of wit, wisdom, or even grammar in her verses or story. Such appeals pour in literally by the thousand every year to every publishing office. The sickly daughter of a poor family; the wife of a drunken husband; a widow; children that must be fed and clothed. What was the critic's honest opinion of her work? How much would it bring in dollars and cents? etc., etc.

I did not open the letter that day. When we reach middle age we have learned, through rough experiences, how many tragedies there are in our street or under our own roof which will be none the better for our handling, and are apt, selfishly, to try to escape the hearing of them.

This letter, however, when I opened it next morning, proved to be not of a tragical sort. The writer was "not dependent on her pen for support"; she "had vowed herself to literature"; she "was resolved to assist in the Progress of humanity." Scarcely had I laid down the letter when I was told that she waited below to see me. The card she sent up was a bit of the flyleaf of a book, cut oblong with scissors, and the name—Miss Barr—written in imitation of engraving. Her back was toward me when I came down, and I had time to read the same sham stylishness written all over her thin little person. The sleazy black silk was looped in the prevailing fashion, a sweeping white plume drooped from the cheap hat, and on her hands were washed cotton gloves.

Instead of the wizened features of the "deadbeat" which I expected, she turned on me a child's face: an ugly face, I believe other women called it, but one of the most innocent and honest in the world. Her brown eyes met yours eagerly, full of a joyous good-fellowship for everything and everybody alive. She poured out her story, too, in a light-hearted way, and in the lowest, friendliest of voices. To see the girl was to be her ally. "People will do anything for me—but publish my manuscripts," she said.

She came from Mississippi; had been the only white child on a poor plantation on the banks of the Yazoo. "I have only had such teaching as my mother could give; she had but two years with a governess. We had no books nor newspapers, except an occasional copy of a magazine sent to us by friends in the North." Her mother was the one central figure in the world to her then. In our after-intercourse she talked of her continually. "She is a little woman—less than I; but she has one of the finest minds in the world," she would cry. "The sight of anything beautiful or the sound of music sways her as the wind does a reed. But she never was twenty miles from the plantation; she has read nothing, knows nothing. My father thinks women are like mares—only useful to bring forth children. My mother's children all died in babyhood but me. There she has lived all her life, with the swamp on one side and the forest of live oak on the other: nothing to do, nothing to think of. Oh, it was frightful! With a mind like hers, any woman would go mad, with that eternal forest and swamp, and the graves of her dead babies just in sight! She rubbed snuff a good deal to quiet herself, but of late years she has taken opium."

"And you?"

"I left her. I hoped to do something for us both. My mind is not of as high order as hers, but it is very different from that of most women. I shall succeed some day," in the most matter-of-fact tones. "As soon as I knew that I was a poet I determined to come to Philadelphia and go

straight to real publishers and real editors. In my country nobody had ever seen a man who had written a book. Ever since I came here I find how hard it is to find out anything about the business of authorship. Medicine, or law, or blacksmithing—everybody knows the workings of those trades, but people with pens in their hands keep the secret of their craft like Freemasons,” laughing.

“You came alone?”

“Quite alone. I hired a little room over a baker’s shop in Pine Street. They are a very decent couple, the baker and his wife. I board myself, and send out my manuscripts. They always come back to me.”

“Where do you send them?”

“Oh, everywhere. I can show you printed forms of rejection from every magazine and literary newspaper in the country,” opening and shutting again a black satchel on her lap. “I have written three novels, and sent them to the ——s’ and ——s’. They sent them back as unavailable. But they never read them. I trick them this a-way: I put a loose blue thread between the third and fourth pages of the manuscript, and it is always there when it comes back.” Her voice broke a little, but she winked her brown eyes and laughed bravely.

“How long have you been here?”

“Three years.”

“Impossible! You are but a child.”

“I am twenty. I had an article published once in a Sunday paper,” producing a slip about two inches long.

Three years, and only that little grain of success! She had supported herself meanwhile, as I learned afterward, by sewing men’s socks for a firm in Germantown.

“You are ready to give up now?”

“No; not if it were ten years instead of three.”

Yet I can swear there was not a drop of New England blood in her little body. One was certain, against all reason, that she would succeed. When even such puny creatures as this takes the world by the throat in that fashion, they are sure to conquer it.

Her books and poems must, I think, have seemed unique to any editor. The spelling was atrocious; the errors of grammar in every line beyond remedy. The lowest pupil in our public schools would have detected her ignorance on the first page. There was, too, in all she said or wrote an occasional gross indecency, such as a child might show: her life on the plantation explained it. Like Juliet, she spoke the language of her nurse. But even Shakespeare’s nurse and Juliet would not be allowed nowadays to chatter at will in the pages of a family magazine.

But in all her ignorance, mistakes, and weaknesses there was no trace of imitation. She plagiarized nobody. There was none of the usual talk of countesses, heather, larks, or emotions of which she knew nothing. She painted over and over again her own home on the Yazoo: the hot still sunshine, the silence of noon, the swamp, the slimy living things in the stagnant ponds, the semitropical forest, the house and negro quarters, with all their dirt and dreary monotony. It was a picture which remained in the mind strong and vivid as a desert by Gérôme or a moor by Boughton.

There could be but one kind of advice to give her—to put away pen and ink, and for three years at least devote herself to hard study. She would, of course, have none of such counsel. The popular belief in the wings of genius, which can carry it over hard work and all such obstacles as ignorance of grammar or even the spelling book, found in her a marked example. Work was for commonplace talent, not for those whose veins were full of the divine ichor.

Meanwhile she went on sewing socks, and sending off her great yellow envelopes, with stamps to bring them back.

"Stamps and paper count up so fast!" she said, with a laugh, into which had grown a pitiful quaver. She would take not a penny of aid. "I shall not starve. When the time has come for me to know that I have failed, I can go back to my own country and live like the other women there."

Meanwhile her case very nearly reached starvation. I remember few things more pathetic than the damp, forlorn little figure in a shabby waterproof, black satchel in hand, which used to come to my door through the snows and drenching rains that winter. Her shoes were broken, and her hands shriveled blue with cold. But a plated gilt chain or a scarlet ribbon used to flaunt somewhere over the meagre, scant poverty. Sometimes she brought news with her. She had work given her—to collect a column of jokes for a Sunday paper, by which she made three dollars a week. But she lost it from trying to insert her own matter, which could not well be reckoned as funny sayings. One day she came flushed with excitement. Somebody had taken her through the Academy of Design and a private gallery of engravings then on exhibition. She had a keen, just eye for form and color, and the feeling of a true artist for both.

"That is what I could have done," she said, after keeping silence a long while. "But what chance had I? I never even saw a picture at home, except those which were cut out of illustrated papers. There seemed to be no way for me but to write."

It was suggested to her that she might find the other way even now. Painting, designing, wood-engraving, were expressions for a

woman's mind, even though, like her own, it was "one of the finest in the world."

She did not smile. "It is too late," she said. "I will go on as I have begun. But it is a pity my mother and I had not known of such things."

After that her light-hearted courage seemed to give way. She persevered, but it was with dogged, indomitable resolution, and little hope.

One day in the spring I was summoned to see a visitor on business. I found a tall, lank young man stalking up and down the room, the most noticeable point about him the shock of red hair and whisker falling over his neck and greasy coat collar. The face was that of an ignorant, small-minded man. But it was candid and not sensual.

He came straight toward me. "Is Marcia Barr here?"

"No; she has been gone for an hour."

He damned his luck in a white heat of rage, which must, I thought, have required some time to kindle. Indeed, I found he had been pacing up and down the street half the morning, having seen her come in. She had gone out by a side door.

"I caught a glimpse of her half a mile off. I have come to Philadelphia three times this year to find her. Good God! how rank poor she is! Where does she live?"

I could not tell him, as Marcia had long ago left the baker's, and changed her quarters every month.

"And I reckon I'll have to wait until she comes hyah again. Tell her it's Zack Biron, the overseer's son, on—on business."

He was not long in unveiling his business, which any woman would soon have guessed. He had come to bring Marcia home and marry her. He had always "wanted her," and the old colonel, her father, had promised he should marry her provided he could bring her back from her mad flight. The colonel was dead, and he was now "runnin' the plantation for ole madam. She's no better than a walkin' corpse, with that damned drug she chews. She can't keep still now: walks, walks incessant about the place, with her eyes set an' the skin clingin' to her bones. I couldn't 'a borne it, I ashuah you, but for the sake of findin' Marcia."

Two months passed, in which he haunted the house. But Marcia did not come. She had begun to frequent newspaper offices, and occasionally was given a trifling bit of work by the managers of the reporting corps—a description of the dresses at a Műnnerchor ball to write, or a puff of some coming play, etc. She came at last to tell me of what she had done.

"It is miserable work. I would rather sew the heels of stockings; but the stocking looms have stopped, and I must live a little longer, at any rate. I think I have something to say, if people only would hear it."

I told her of Biron and his chase for her.

"I saw him outside the window the last time I was here. That was the reason I went out by the side street. I knew he was looking for me. You will not tell him I have been here?"

"But, Marcia, the man seems honest and kindly—"

"If he found me," in the same quiet tone, "he would marry me and take me back to the plantation."

"And you are not ready to give up?"

"No, I will not give up. I shall get into the right groove at last," with the infectious little laugh which nobody could resist.

The waterproof cloak was worn down quite into the cotton by this time, and the straw hat had been darned around the ragged edge. But there was a cheap red rose in it. Her cheekbones showed high, and her eyes shone out of black hollows.

"No, I have no cough, and I don't need medicine," she said, irritably, when questioned. "I have had plenty of offers of help. But I'd rather steal than take alms." She rose hastily and buttoned her cloak.

"This man Biron waits only a word to come to you. He is faithful as a dog."

She nodded carelessly. Biron, or a return to her old home, held no part in her world, it was plain to see.

I was out of the city for several months. A few weeks after my return I saw in the evening paper one day, in the usual list of crimes and casualties, an item headed "*Pitiable Case.*—A young woman named Burr was arrested yesterday on charge of theft, and taken to the Central Station. About eleven o'clock the other women in the cell where she was confined perceiving that she lay on a bench breathing in a stertorous manner, summoned Lieutenant Pardy, who found life to be almost extinct. A physician was called, who discovered that the woman had swallowed some poisonous drug. With her first breath of returning consciousness she protested her innocence of the charge. She appears to have been in an extreme state of want. But little hope is entertained of her recovery. Miss Burr is favorably known, we believe, as a writer of some ability for the daily press."

In spite of the difference of name, it must be Marcia.

When we reached the Central Station we were told that her discharge was already procured. She had friends who knew what wires to work. In the outer room were half a dozen young men, reporters, a foreman of a printing room, and one or two women, dramatic or musical critics. There is as eager an *esprit de corps* among that class of journalists as among actors. They were all talking loudly, and zealous in

defense of "little Marty," as they called her, whom they declared to be "a dunce so far as head went, but pure and guileless as a child."

"I knew she was devilishly hard up," said one, "but never suspected she was starving. She would not borrow a dollar, she had that pride in her."

Marcia was still in the cell, lying on an iron stretcher. The Mississippian, Biron, was with her, kneeling on the floor in his shirt sleeves, chafing her hand. He had taken off his coat to wrap about her.

"I've a good Quaker nurse and a room ready for her at the Continental the minute she can be moved," he whispered. "Look a-here!" turning down the poor bit of lace and red ribbon at her throat, his big hairy hand shaking. "Them bones is a'most through the skin! The doctor says it's hunger—hunger! And *I* was eatin' three solid meals a day—like a beast!"

Hunger had almost done its work. There was but a feeble flicker of life left in the emaciated little body; not enough to know or speak to us when at last she opened her dull eyes.

"None o' them folks need consarn themselves any further about her," said Biron, savagely. "She'll come home to her own now, thank God, and be done with rubbisy bookmakers. Mrs. Biron will live like a lady."

Two or three weeks later, the most splendid of hired phaetons stopped at my door, and Mr. and Mrs. Biron sent up their cards. Mr. Biron was glowing with happiness. It asserted itself offensively somehow in the very jingling of his watch chain and tie of his cravat.

"We return immediately to the plantation," he said, grandiloquently. "I reckon largely on the effect of her native air in restorin' Mrs. Biron to health."

Marcia was magnificent in silk and plumes, the costliest that her owner's money could buy. Her little face was pale, however, and she looked nobody in the eye.

"We leave for the South tomorrow," she said, calmly, "and I shall not return to Philadelphia. I have no wish to return."

"Shall I send you books or papers, Marcia?"

"No, I thank you; nothing."

When they rose to go, her husband said, "Mrs. Biron has some—rubbish she wishes to leave with you. Hyah!" calling out of the window. "You nigger, bring that thah bag!"

It was the old black satchel. Marcia took it in her white-gloved hands, half opened it, shut it quickly, came up closer.

"These are my manuscripts," she said. "Will you burn them for me? All: do not leave a line, a word. I could not do it."

I took the satchel, and they departed. Mr. Biron was vehement in his protestations of friendship and invitations to visit the plantation. But Marcia did not say a word, even of farewell.

A Paying Concern



GERTRUDE ROSCOE



THIRTY-FIVE CUTS ahead of the room. How's that for No. 2 section? I tell you my weavers are hustlers. If it hadn't been for those two snails there in the corner, I would have booked an even forty more than any other fixer in the mill. Confound their lazy bones! I'll see their finish in a week or two, or my name isn't Miles Dent."

"Have you got any new method of making them tired, or is it the same old racket?" asked Delaney of No. 10 section, with a shade of sarcasm that was wasted on Dent.

"No, the regular system will do for a while, I guess. Fan was sniveling all yesterday because she couldn't get the last round of cuts off in time to have them checked on this week's pay sheet, and all the weavers, except Nell, miles ahead of her. You ought to have seen the smart ones pretending to cry and wringing out their handkerchiefs. They were making it hot for her, I tell you."

"Has it gone so far as that?"

"Yes; and it will go further. There's no premium on lazy weavers here. Fan is about ready to give up. I've noticed that they don't hang on long after they begin to weep. But Nell is tougher. She's capable of making me a pile of trouble; but she'll go just the same."

"Where?" questioned Delaney, quietly.

"Anywhere for all I care. You might take them both over on No. 10. The slow weavers seem to gravitate toward your end of the room naturally. You are always behind the whole procession, and eight or ten cuts a week off your account wouldn't make much difference. I've got a couple of dandy weavers all ready to jump in as soon as there's a vacancy on No. 2."

Delaney looked across the room to the two weavers under discussion, but said nothing, and Miles lapsed into silence. He knew about how far it was safe to go with the fixer of No. 10.

The two men stood by Dent's workbench, in the great weaving shed of Blanton's mill, as they held the conversation partly reported above, and seeing Miles apparently at leisure, one of the girls who had incurred his displeasure approached with a shuttle in her hand. It was greatly worn, and had been irregularly whittled and sand-papered out of all true proportions. It had evidently been splintering for a long time, and when a splintered shuttle is driven through a warp by a power loom, it makes trouble of a serious kind for the weaver.

"This shuttle turns in the warp, and I can't make it run at all. I've had half a dozen bad smashes with it. The other one is nearly as bad, and I ought to have a pair of new shuttles. I haven't woven ten yards on that loom in two days. Will you come over and see how they work?"

The weaver manifested neither anger nor impatience, but she spoke with a certain effort, as though she would get through with a very disagreeable piece of work that must be done. The fixer took the shuttle, but made no reply whatever, and after a minute or two, Delaney spoke kindly, to relieve the awkward pause.

"I'm away behind all of 'em again this week, Nellie; but we will carry a lot of cloth over on the looms to begin next week with, and we'll do better than some of these extra smart fellows. Miles, here, has peeled every loom bare to make a big show."

Miles turned suddenly toward the bench, and brought the useless old shuttle down across the vise, breaking it in two. Then he turned his back to the weaver with ostentatious rudeness; and making no attempt to reply to Delaney's talk, she went wearily back to her looms.

Blanton's mill had been running behind for several years. There had been long periods of idleness for the help, longer periods of short hours, and frequent reductions of pay. Nobody quite believed those stories of running at a loss and working half-time, just to give the operatives a chance to live through the hard times, that were industriously circulated. The general impression seemed to be that the owners and managers found that these tactics best served their purpose of grinding the help down to the lowest notch of a living wage. It was

better policy than to provoke strikes by sudden cut-downs when everything was running smoothly. After the mill had been closed for a few weeks, or for three or four months, the people would be glad to go to work at greatly reduced wages, and the general condition from the manager's point of view was much better than it would have been after a strike and lockout and a bitter labor contest covering the same period. There was no other large employing industry in the place, the business of which consisted largely in supplying the population gathered about the mill. Many of the traders closed their shops after disposing of the perishable goods on hand, and the whole town fell into business lethargy whenever work failed at Blanton's. All but the saloons: these seemed to flourish perennially, whether the people had employment or not.

In the fall and early winter of the year before the time of which I write, the mill had been closed for four months. New machinery had been put in, and extensive repairs made, and then it was rumored that a new agent had come from Connecticut, who announced his intention of making Blanton's a paying concern.

"There will be no more idleness and want in Blantonville," he had said to the rector of St. John's, who called on him a few days after his arrival. And the good man gave the news to his flock, and rejoiced with them that the long affliction of their enforced idleness would be ended soon.

There was a 10 percent reduction of wages when the mill started. Everybody expected that, and was prepared for it. But none was prepared for the readjustment of prices on all piecework as soon as the new patterns were set up. Nominally, the pay was the same by the yard, or thousand, or whatever the unit of value might be for the work; but as the new work was finer, more complicated, and much slower in production, it paid proportionately less to the operative, the difference on some grades amounting to 25 and even 30 percent. The people were helpless, and had to make the best of it. They had been out of work so long that nearly every family was heavily in debt, and there was no other work to be had.

The hand of the new agent was soon felt heavily in every department of the mill. "Tighten up the gears! Tighten up the gears!" was his watchword. "Bring the teeth of the cogs together sharp; you are wasting power. You are putting a premium on laziness and incapacity." And to some of those who felt the inexorable pressure he seemed to have the fiend's own invention and insight in the selection and equipment of his human tools.

One of his first innovations had been the paying of the loom-fixers by the piece. The great weaving shed was divided crosswise into a

dozen or more sections, and a loom-fixer had charge of each of these divisions. His work was to keep the looms in repair, supply the weavers with new warps as they were needed, and look after all the petty details of their work. These men had formerly been paid fixed weekly wages; but it was argued that if they received a certain definite amount for each cut of fifty yards woven on their sections, they would look after their work more sharply, and the looms would not be allowed to stand idle waiting for repairs so frequently or so long. It is with the practical working of this rule that this true story has to do.

The fixers grumbled a good deal at first, and then set resolutely to work to use the power placed in their hands to better their condition. A sharp rivalry soon developed among them, each trying to get the largest amount of cloth to his credit. As some weavers are naturally stronger and more efficient than others, there was soon a considerable shifting about among them. Many of the slower ones got discouraged, and left voluntarily, or were discharged on some frivolous or trumped-up complaint. The fixers carried on this work covertly at first; but after a while, seeing that their superiors took no notice of it, they proceeded with arrogance to weed out the objectionable weavers.

This process had been going on for nearly a year, and Dent of No. 2 section had only two weavers left who were not able to drive through the whole week without once stopping to take breath. These two, Fanny Mace and Eleanor Barnes, were good weavers, doing their work well and performing as much as average weavers ever accomplish under normal conditions. But they could not keep the pace set by Miles Dent's picked crew of men and strong young women, who were foolishly using up five years of their lives in one to "keep solid" with the ambitious fixer. They had no homes, they had not yet gotten clear of the debts contracted during the stopping of the mill, and they steeled themselves resolutely to endure as best they could the petty tyranny to which they were subjected.

"Is your head any better today, Fanny?" Eleanor stopped to inquire on her way back from her fruitless attempt to get a new shuttle from Miles.

"O, Nell, you don't know how awfully it aches, and the noise seems different—farther off somehow. Isn't it strange that I don't get hungry? I haven't been near the table since Sunday."

"You ought to eat, whether you have an appetite or not. You'll be sick soon, if you don't. Neither of us can afford to be sick, you know."

"I'm sick now, and my work goes so badly that I never have a minute to rest. If Miles would only fix my looms, I know I could do as much as half of those he brags about. There's something the matter

with everyone of them, and he just won't do a thing that he can help. Have you got your new shuttles yet?"

"No, and he has broken one of the old ones. Miles is down on both of us, Fanny, and I wish I could find something else to do."

"If he would only let me earn my usual pay for a few weeks, I wouldn't care so much. It seems as though I never should get that backboard bill paid. I can't even save a dollar from my last week's pay; and I could have had another cut off of each loom, if he hadn't been so hateful. I can't understand it. I never did anything to injure Miles in my life, but I believe he hates the sight of me."

Fanny had bound her aching head in a folded strip of wet cloth, and from under it her blue eyes with the dark circles beneath them looked out with such hopeless, puzzled appeal that Eleanor could find no words to reply. She hurried to her own looms, hardly less out of repair and quite as difficult to manage as those of her alley-mate; but she was stronger than Fanny, and knew better how to husband her strength. She found plenty to do, and could not leave her work for an instant for the rest of the day. But a little later, she saw that Fanny was crying again, and the girls all around her were hooting and screaming and pretending to cry, evidently following the lead of Dent's wife, whose looms were in the same row.

Fanny went that night to the crowded, noisy boardinghouse that served her for a home, feeling that her work in the mill was done. She had made a brave struggle for weeks and weeks, but the limit of her endurance was reached at last. As she carried her pitcher of water up the three long flights of stairs, she found it so heavy that she was obliged to set it down on every third stair and wait for strength to lift it and go on up to her room. She bathed in the same way, with frequent and long stops, drinking eagerly of the cold water from time to time, which seemed to revive her failing strength. Robing herself for the night in clean, white things from her trunk, she crept into bed, and almost immediately sank into unconsciousness. That night the boarders were kept awake by her raving in the delirium of brain fever, and in the morning the woman who kept the house entered her room in a fury of indignation, and ordered her to get up and pick up her things and find another boarding place at once, for it had been reported to her that the sick girl was intoxicated. Fanny only muttered incoherently and picked busily at the sheets with aimless hands.

"Let the hussy be till she sleeps it off. I can't beat any sense into her in that condition, but she'll have to pack as soon as she can stagger out of the house," was the final word of the landlady to the chamber girl, who was peering in at the door.

When Eleanor saw that Fanny was absent from her work, she was glad that her friend had concluded to take a much-needed rest. But in a little while the report that she was howling drunk, and had kept the whole boardinghouse awake all night, was circulated through the room, to the uproarious amusement of those who had actively persecuted her. This story alarmed Eleanor, and she applied at once for leave to go out and see herself how it was with Fanny. The report itself was sufficient proof that she must be suffering at the boardinghouse for need of attention and care.

The overseer curtly refused her request, on the plea that her work would have to be stopped, as there was no spare hand; and in the afternoon it was the same. Just before the speed went down at night, a heavy casting fell on her foot, bruising it so badly that she had to be carried home in one of the mill wagons, and it was two days before she could hobble about. At noon of the third day, disregarding the pain of her injured foot, she returned to her work, going around by Fanny's house, intending to see her before entering the mill. She had worried incessantly about Fanny, knowing what it was to be sick in a factory boardinghouse. But when she reached the corner of the block, she saw that it was forever too late. The undertaker's wagon stood before the door, and his men were bringing out the cheap pine coffin that the town provided for its friendless and penniless dead.

When Eleanor went down the alley to her looms, she had to pick her way around and over a perfect clutter of parts and pieces of the looms that had been Fanny's. Miles was at work on them, and was evidently bent on doing a thorough job. He took them one by one, pulled them to pieces, and seemed fairly to make them over again; and a large, cheerful girl, with many frizzes around her face, and very clean new waist and apron, took charge of those that he repaired as fast as they were in running order, leaving the rest of the set idle till they were fixed. This girl was very friendly with those who had abused Fanny, and Eleanor learned after a while that Dent's wife was her sister.

This very thing had been repeated on the section at least a dozen times within the year, and what was the use of wearing out the remnant of her health and strength in the useless contest? Better leave at once, while she was able to work. So reasoned Eleanor, watching the repairing of the purposely neglected looms. But there was one thing more to be tried. Perhaps she could get transferred to No. 10 section. Delaney was the only fixer in the room who had gone on in his usual way and absolutely refrained from using the power in his hands to favor one or injure another of the weavers whose looms were in his care.

Eleanor found the agent in the overseer's office, and a large, thick-set Englishman, with square jaws and cruel little gray eyes, carrying an apron rolled in a towel under his arm. The three were talking affably together. Seeing her employer thus occupied, Eleanor would have retreated, but he called sharply to know what she wanted.

"Think you can run the self-feeders, do you?" he said, when she had preferred her request. "Well, I've got a little bone to pick with Delaney, and you may as well wait a few minutes. Perhaps you will change your mind about wanting to go to work on No. 10."

The overseer seemed in great good spirits, and there was nothing to do but stand aside and wait as he bade her, though she knew there was something dreadful going to be done when the morose man was in this mood of politeness and pleasantry. Through the glass door she saw Delaney coming, with his head a little more erect than usual. He bowed to the agent, and stood silently before the desk, looking quietly from the overseer to the Englishman, who shifted the towel and apron to his other arm, as if to attract attention to these symbols of instant preparation for work.

"How is it, Delaney, that you are so much behind the others with your work?" began the agent, taking the overseer's work out of his hands, to his no small chagrin. Everyone knew that he had reduced the heads of departments to mere automatons, but there was usually some show before the help of allowing them to do their own work.

"This business is all cut and dried," said Delaney, with a glance at the man with the apron. "You might as well give me my time at once. I can fix looms, but I've never yet done some of the work that seems to be expected of the fixers here, and I don't intend to do it. Where's the use of spinning it out?"

"Very well; take this man down to No. 10, and put him in charge of the work. Your bill will be ready as soon as you want it," said the overseer, speaking with great dignity, and the two fixers went out into the shed together. "Now, Barnes," said the overseer, with a disagreeable grin, "what can I do for you?"

"Nothing," said Eleanor quietly, "but write me a bill of my time. Miles told me yesterday that a competent weaver was all ready to take my looms if I was dissatisfied with his work, and she is welcome to the job. I shall be permanently lame if I try to work anymore with my foot in its present condition. Delaney would have been a little easy with me for a week or two, and I could have worried along with it till it gets well. But I should have no chance with the man you have hired in his place."

The overseer turned purple in the face at this plain speaking, and fairly shouted a rough command for silence. "If you think this mill is a hospital or charitable institution, you are greatly mistaken. Get out as soon as you can walk. I've no use for cripples. I want able-bodied help, and there's plenty of it waiting three deep around the door any morning."

This speech was embroidered with oaths, and more followed Eleanor out of the office, till they were drowned by the noise of the looms, as she went back into the shed for her hat and shawl. Seeing her gather up her things, the set that had tortured Fanny began hooting and shrieking, and kept it up till the door closed behind her.

When Eleanor entered the dining room at her boardinghouse that night, the landlady followed her closely. Waiting till she had laid her hand on her chair to draw it back from the table, the woman spoke in a loud, distinct voice: "You can have no supper here tonight, Miss Barnes, and I must ask you to vacate your room at once. I have stopped your pay at the office, and it will do you no good to present your bill for payment tomorrow. There's not half enough due you to pay my bill, and I shall keep your trunk till you pay the balance. I will allow you one change of clothing and your working aprons. We might as well attend to it now."

Without a word Eleanor followed her out of the room, where the people remaining, stricken dumb and silent at the first word of the official voice of the landlady, now burst into indiscriminate gabble and laughter, mingled with the clatter of knife and dish.

This landlady had dramatic tastes, and invariably worked up a little scene whenever any opportunity offered, and her audience was always appreciative. She preceded Eleanor to her room, and watched the packing of the trunk, and also of the hand-satchel that Eleanor was to be permitted to take with her. Then she locked the trunk herself, and put the key in her pocket. Holding the lamp in her hand, she stood aside for the girl to pass out, intending to lock the door of the room before she went away. Then for the first time Eleanor spoke.

"I think I will dress my foot, if you have no objection, Mrs. Haines. The bandage is too tight, and I can walk better if it is loosened."

"Oh, very well, put out the light when you are ready to go. I will come up later, and close the room."

Left alone, Eleanor undressed the injured foot, bathed it in arnica, and replaced the bandage more comfortably. The afternoon's work had made the swelling much worse, and the flesh was purple and ridged into the folds of the bandage; but the pain abated under the treatment,

and she found herself able to walk down the stairs and out of the house quite steadily. Pausing on the doorstep, she turned the collar of her jacket up about her neck and drew on her mittens, for a fine snow was sifting down, and the wind drew in from the river in cold gusts. The people from the boardinghouses along the street were coming out from supper, and hurrying by in a jostling crowd. Waiting till the space in front of the house was temporarily clear, Eleanor took up her satchel, stepped carefully down to the icy sidewalk, and walked slowly away.

Two men paused on the steps of a business block to watch the crowd from the mill going by and exchange a few words at parting.

"That's about the last of the hands. There are only a few stragglers now, and we can dodge them," said one. "Look at that face passing under the lamp. Did you ever see such a peculiar color?"

"Often, at the operating table," replied the other, who was a doctor, "but it's rather unusual on the street. That woman is suffering intense pain. It's lucky for us that we can't see and hear all that is carried behind these masks of faces."

"They've had a hard time for the last few years, but things promise to be better for the hands now employed, as well as for the rest of us. The mill has been running nearly ten months, and they tell me there are advance orders for a year to come. The new agent seems to have kept his word, and made Blanton's a paying concern."

Doherty



ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS WARD



IF YOU WANT TO SEE the inside of a station, you'd ought to have been here last night. It isn't often, ma'am, there is a night that would be suitable for you. I don't think there's been half a dozen this winter that I'd want you round if you was my daughter or my sister—begging your pardon, ma'am, as the best way I can put it to you to express my meaning and the feeling that a man has about such things.

Ladies drop in of an errand now and then—you ain't the first. Curious errands, too. One, she wanted to circulate a total abstinence pledge; and another, she offered to pay the salary of a chaplain. She brought a specimen with her. Most I remember of him is what a little chap he was. Then I remember three coming in a squad to teach the women how to darn stockings. And one—but she was young—she brought a package of tracts, on pink paper. Then we've had 'em bring sandwiches, and hymnbooks, and laylocks, and other singular things.

Most of 'em that drop in have that way about 'em as though the officers were a-locking these folks up here for their own personal gratification. Can't seem to get it into their heads! I always like to be polite to ladies, too, myself. Then, another thing. They're bent on it, these creeturs ain't past making over. Want to give 'em old clothes and get 'em work; set 'em up in little shops, and that. Shops! There isn't a man

here once a month that would set under a roof, if you'd give him a salary for it.

Why, once we used to give 'em soup. That was last winter. It didn't work. We don't do it now. But the city had a soup-day here one while, and a fish firm down on Atlantic Wharf said we might have their heads. So we told the men, if they'd go down and get the heads it would make their soup so much the richer. Don't you see? Now we couldn't get a man jack of 'em to stir. Not one. They'd rather go without than take the trouble. They're all so. All of a piece. And the women—well, the women—

Upon my word, I wish you *had* been here last night. I've been Lieutenant in this station for twelve years, and I don't think I ever felt as I did last night. It's puckery kind of work this—like taking alum on your tongue. After a year or so a man feels himself wizzling and toughening up in his feelings. Can't afford to have feelings down here, more 'n you can afford to stand round a burning house in cotton clothes. It only scorches you and don't make any odds to the house.

Ever see our books? No? Well just you look here, if you please. Just count those pages. Will you? From there to there. We took in all those in December. In the month of December 1876, we had in this one station two thousand two hundred and fifty-two men and women. Of course, there's the usual share of arrests. There's Mahoney, and Jones, and Sullivan, and Pete Cartwright, and Julia Henderson right under my finger, all arrests. All drunk. But most of 'em are vagrancies in the wintertime. You see it was pretty cold last December, especially nights. And then we're careful about our officers. Don't allow kicking, and no more swearing at 'em than circumstances require. These creeturs get such things round among themselves. They have a fancy for this station, maybe. I don't know how that is. We mean to be humane on this corps. That's our theory. Some of our officers have a very gentlemanly way. Not that we think it makes much difference. I tell you, madam (you may better understand it at the outset), I don't know what your intentions are, of course—but ladies come with so many charitable and curious designs which it seems a pity to disappoint; but I tell you the folks that get into these places are a hopeless lot. They're folks without a chance. Most of us have a chance, I reckon, in this world, some time or nuther, even them poor devils. But by the time they get here their chance is as dead as John Brown's body. I don't say there's never an exception. Now, there was that creetur last night. Maybe if somebody'd taken her in hand several years ago—if a lady with the way you seem to have (I hope you'll excuse me, ma'am, but there is a difference in a lady's way, such as I think you'd have to be a man and do a pretty

rough man's work, like mine, for instance, to understand so clearly as you might). I wished last night, I will confess, that there'd been a lady here. It did occur to me to go home for my wife. But I never bring my wife into the station house.

Here's the entry—one of the last ones I mean. See!

"D:—Doherty, Ellen. February 20th, 1877. Vagrancy." When I get time, I'm going to count up how often that woman's name has been on these books. But it would take a good deal of time. It's some years.

I remember very well the first time she came. Don't know how I happen to. There's such a lot of young girls. And pretty ones, too. This one was more than commonly good-looking—an Irish girl. She had a dark style and was paler than most of 'em. I think it must have been five years ago. It was the first time she'd ever been arrested. She took on dreadfully about it. She had n't begun to drink then. And what she was taken up for had never happened before. It was the first time, she said. Someways, I remember, I believed her. Seemed as if she'd break her heart. Had n't any folks, she said. Her 'n were dead. She cooped up in a little heap in the corner, on the floor, that night, and sat crying all the night. It wasn't till nigh morning that the other women could get a word out of her. If I remember straight, we had an uncommonly rough lot of women-folks on that night. I wouldn't have put her in among 'em: but there's no other way. I never get quite used to that—shutting up a young thing with an old one.

Well, so she was sent to the House for thirty days; and by and by she was back again. She came of her own accord that time. Said she couldn't get anything to do. Seems to me she said she wanted honest work. They do say it once in a while. And it was a pretty cold night. She came for a place to sleep.

So after that we got pretty well used to her; but mostly after she begun to drink, and alter, like the rest. It don't take long. Their own mothers wouldn't know 'em mostly in three years or so; less, maybe, as it happens.

Well, yes. Our rule is: come a fortnight and you go. When one comes steady for two weeks every night, then it is a case of vagrancy and we can send 'em to the almshouse. But Doherty, she was pretty careful. She grew smart as she grew worse. If she got taken up, it wasn't for a long pull. Never knew her in the House at the longest more than three months at a time. And when she come to lodge, she steered pretty clear of the law—coming for a few nights, you see, and then off again on her own ways. They're more afraid of the almshouse than they are of hell, these folks.

So she got to be a pretty old customer—always come to this station. I don't know but that was my fault. Once I give her a pair of my

wife's shoes. It was one January morning, twelve below zero. She hadn't any stockings, only a pair of old rubbers, and her bare feet came through onto the pavement, and it was pretty icy. I suppose I might have lost my place for it. Eh! Cap'n? But I don't think Doherty ever told of me.

So you see, ma'am, we've all got kind of dependent on her. Should have missed the creetur, I dare say, if she hadn't come. You get so used to the same thing, you know, much as you do to your temper or your whiskers. She'd come in, and I'd say: "Well, Doherty, back again?" And generally I went down myself to see her in the cell. Sometimes I do, with the old hands. She grew to be a pretty tough case, Doherty did. And yet there was always something I liked about Doherty.

You see she used to sing. Sometimes they do. And once or twice I've had a chap here who could draw portraits of the rest. Scrawl the walls all over, if he wasn't watched. One of the worst cases we ever had on these books, his name was Gaffrey—Peter Gaffrey. Killed an officer, finally, with a horseshoe. He used to talk Latin when he was drunk, and some other language. I thought it was Dutch: but the chief heard him, and said he guessed it was Greek. The fellow used to get the rest all ranged round like an audience, and then go at it. But generally they talk religion. It's more popular.

This Doherty that I speak of, she had a beautiful voice. I'm something of a judge of music. My wife sings in a choir in a Baptist church. There was a lady happened here once—wanted to get some scholars for her Bible class, she said; and she heard Doherty sing. It was on one of her sprees. I wouldn't have had a lady heard Doherty sing that night, if I'd been in time to stop it. None of the men are often quite like that. This lady, she grew so faint we had to carry her away. She didn't come again. It was early—six o'clock in the morning, too—and she'd come all the way from the West End to see the women before they were let out. We let them go at six o'clock. They don't get in very thick till toward midnight. By one o'clock we're pretty full.

Time and again I've set up here looking over the books at dead of night, alone along with an officer or so, and heard the call go up from a man somewhere down below:

"Doherty! Sing us to sleep, Doherty! Sing us to sleep!"

And then Doherty from the women's cell would hear them, through the wall, and she'd begin. And the fighting and the swearing and all the horrid noise would quiet down; and, true enough, I think they slept. I had a Newfoundland dog that went to sleep when my wife played the cabinet organ. Sometimes that woman would sing enough to make your flesh creep. She'd lost all her looks by that time. But she

never sang so when she was sober. And sometimes she'd strike up a pretty thing, as clean and sweet as the hush-a-by my own baby hears, ma'am, from my own wife's lips. Sometimes she sang "Auld Lang Syne" or "Home, Sweet Home"; and once that woman picked up a song called the "Three Fishers." Maybe you know it. You could hear her all over this great building:

For men must work, and women must weep,
And women must weep.

"Don't you ever sing any hymns, Doherty?" I says to her one night—more to see what she would say, you know. But she looked at me and made no answer, and passed on. Doherty never quite lost her ways, like other women, when she was herself. Sometimes she was quite manageable and gentle in her ways. That night she didn't sing at all. The men kept it up, off and on, all night: "Is Doherty in tonight?" "Has n't Doherty come?" "Sing us to sleep, Doherty! Sing us to sleep!"

But she wouldn't open her lips; and when morning came—it was a snowy morning—and I let her out, she tugged a little, this way, on my sleeve, as she went out, and said: "Good-bye, Lieutenant," like a lady. She didn't show herself again for a long while after that.

This winter she's come pretty often. In December she come nigh her fortnight's term; but she cleared out just in time. Then again this month. It's been a pretty cold winter, and the woman seemed sickly. I felt sorry for her. She'd grown unpleasant looking, and she coughed. I don't think she had any place of her own this season, anywhere. We could n't find out. The Cap'n and I both felt a kind of interest, you see, she'd been on our books so long. It was only natural. But I do assure you, ma'am, there is nothing to be done for such a case. Nothing whatever. I wouldn't look like that, if I was you. You can't help it. Him that permits 'em, He strikes 'em off our books, now and then, into his, madam; and best for Him and them and us, I take it, when it happens.

Now, last night, the 23d of February, that woman, she'd just made out her fourteenth night consecutive; and I had it planned to send her to Tewksbury today. She'd be warm in the poorhouse, at least, and sure of her rations. Cap'n and I both felt glad of it when we saw her stagger in. He said: "We've got her this time." And I said: "Here again, Doherty?"

I went up to speak to her, for I felt a little sorry, too, knowing it was the last time. For you couldn't understand how familiar their faces grow, nor the kind of feeling that an officer gets about them, now and then.

There is the entry just as I put it down, after so many times.

"No. 31 (she came in rather early)—No. 31. D:—*Doherty, Ellen. Vagrancy. Sick.*" For we saw at once that she was pretty sick. She'd been beating about in the storm. The snow was all over her. I noticed she had on a clean calico dress. She stood just where you're standing, ma'am, while I made the entry. It took the snow some time to melt, for it had sleeted some. She looked almost as if she was in a white dress, she was so covered. She had her hair done up neat, too.

I thought I'd go and see her in the cell myself. So I went down. She walked very slow and seemed weak. "Tired, Doherty?" said I.

"Lieutenant," said she, "folks used to call me Nell. Nobody called me Doherty till I begun to come to the police station. I don't think anybody called me that till I'd been into the House," says she.

Then I said, for I thought I'd pacify her, if I could: "Are you sick tonight, Nell?"

"Oh, my God!" says she—just like that. Then she threw up her arms over her head, and began to sob and take on. But she didn't swear. She felt too sick, I take it. So we put her in with the rest, and she got into the corner and sat crying.

It was not till toward midnight that she begun. They didn't get well in and quieted before that. But every now and then the men would call: "Sing us to sleep, Doherty! Where is Doherty? Doherty! Sing us to sleep!"

The storm set in hard toward midnight. It beats heavily here upon the office windows, as you see, ma'am; and we get a pretty clean sweep of the wind, on account of the street running to the wharves. I sent down once to ask how Doherty seemed: but the officer reported that she was quiet, and he wished the rest were. They'd all set in, men and women, he said, in concert, a-crying out: "Sing us to sleep, Doherty!"

Pretty soon she began. I could hear her plain above the roaring of the storm. She began—Doherty began—that—that poor—miserable—creetur—she that had once been a woman like other woman-folks—excuse me, ma'am; but she's been on our books a good many years. And I've heard her sing such things! I never looked to be taken by surprise, as Doherty took me. You're not surprised very easy, in such a place as this, at anything your fellow-sinners do.

But about midnight, when the storm was at its thick and the cells were growing still, Doherty, she sat up and began to sing a hymn. She sang:

Shall we gather at the river?

My boy sings that at Sunday school, and my wife, she strikes it up the first thing on the cabinet organ every Sunday night. Doherty sang it all through:

At the margin of the river,
Washing up its silver spray,
We shall walk and worship ever,
All the happy, golden day.

Those are the words. I thought perhaps you wouldn't know them. Folks sing them a great deal in the Baptist church.

Before you could have cocked a pistol it was as quiet as the grave all through this place. The officers looked at one another. All the men waked up. The women, they got together in a heap about her. The Cap'n said to me: *Doherty's* singing *hymn*-tunes!" I said I thought we'd go down and see; and down we went.

When we looked in at the grating, I wish, ma'am, you could have seen those men—ragged, rough, red, drunk. Some of 'em taken in awful crimes. No, I don't wish you had seen them. But there they set, as silent as a row of angels on the judgment day, a-listening to hear that woman sing. One and another, they said: "Hush! Hush!" And one fellow said: "I used to sing that song myself." He was up for assault and battery. Badly beaten, too, himself, about the face. He crept along the wall, I noticed, on his knees, to get where he could hear her better. When she stopped, he hollered out:

"Give us some more, Doherty!"

And the rest said:

"Doherty, give us another psalm-tune!"

But one of the women said:

"Come, Nell! Sing us to sleep with the hymns."

So then she began again; and she gave it to 'em, one upon another, fast and clear. Heaven knows where the creetur learned 'em. At some Protestant Sunday school, maybe, where she'd wandered in at holidays. They go a good deal, on account of the Christmas presents.

We all got round her there—the men inside and the officers with-out—and listened for awhile. I don't think I ever heard her sing so in all my life. Doherty had a fine voice, and no mistake. If she'd been respectably born, she'd have been a great singer, that woman, I take it; and folks would have been running to the opera and to concert halls to hear her.

So there she sat and sung. She set up in one corner, with her chin upon her hands and noticed nobody; but stared straight on before her. She sang "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and "Depths of Mercy"; and she sung "I heard the voice of Jesus say," and "Love at Home," and all those. And all the men and all the women listened. And I saw the Cap'n draw his hand acrost his eyes. And I'll own it was too much for *me*. I will, indeed.

To see her there, letting out those holy words so trustfully, as you might say, ma'am, as if she had as much right to 'em as anybody—that—poor—wretched—Madam, it was enough to break your heart to hear her. I couldn't help remembering how pretty she had been and young, and how she took on the first night she ever come to us.

Pretty soon I come away upstairs—for she unmanned me so, before the men; and I set down here and had it out alone. But while I was setting here I heard a lull, and one of the Irish boys called out:

"Give us the one more, Doherty! Then ye can take yer sleep yerself!"

And then, ma'am, she began, quite low and in a faint voice, and very sweet, and she sung:

"Jesus, Lover of my soul."

She sung it this way, singing louder now and then:

"Let *me* to Thy bosom fly,
While the billows near *me* roll. . . .
Hide *me*, O Thou Saviour, hide,"

and in the midst of the verse she stopped. The men called to her, and the women; and the Cap'n said:

"Give us the rest, Nell!"

I was rather glad he called her Nell just then; for when we got in, wondering what it all meant, and hushing up the women, ma'am, as best we could, we found her lying turned a little on her side, with her face against the wall, quite dead.

It doesn't happen so often, ma'am, that we ever get quite toughened to it. And being a woman makes it a little different. I which you'd seen her. Upon my soul, I do. I wish some woman had been there of a different sort from them about her. We don't often have a prettier nor a more modest and more gentle creetur than Doherty was the first night we ever saw her here. I wish you could have heard her sing the hymns.

Anna Malann



ANNIE TRUMBULL SLOSSON



GROUP OF BOYS ranging in age from six to twelve, a small dog in the midst held tightly, while five little heads, brown, black, flaxen, and fiery red, all bent closely over the animal; a river conveniently near—what wonder that I thought I understood the scene! I had looked upon so many such, the surroundings, the actors, the little victim, almost identical. I love dogs, I am very fond of boys, but somehow I do not always enjoy seeing the two classes together. It was a hot, still day in August. We were driving down from the mountains toward our home in southern New England, not by the direct and shortest route, but by a wandering, circuitous way, changing our plans from day to day, to suit our own or our horses' tastes or convenience. A rambling, lazy, hot-weather sort of journey it was. We had spent the last night at Morris, and were now going to Thacherville, some fifteen miles away. Our road was a pleasant one, along the bank of Wild River. Saint-John's-wort, wild sunflowers, black-eyed Susans, the earliest goldenrod, and all the yellow and orange blossoms with which August shines and flames, grew along our way. Sometimes the vivid red of the cardinal flower flashed upon our sight, and asters of every tint, from white to deepest blue and purple, starred the roadside. I was very comfortable, lying idly back in the carriage, and looking out at the birds and flowers and butterflies, and did not care to move. But the little

group attracted my notice, and I called a halt. Stepping from the carriage, I walked toward the boys, ready with the appeal I had so often made in behalf of my dumb favorites. They were so absorbed that at first they took no notice of my approach. But in brushing through some tall plants a cracking twig or stem roused them, and one or two, turning, held up warning fingers or shook their heads to express disapproval of my coming nearer. Fired with missionary zeal, I kept on my course and walked quickly toward them. Suddenly one of the group, a brown-faced, barefooted little chap, some ten years old, started on tiptoe to meet me. He did not speak till quite close, and then it was in a whisper. "Please don't come any nigher, lady," he said, "you'll frighten him."

"What do you mean?" I cried. "What are you doing to that dog? Tell me this instant."

"Oh, don't, don't speak so loud!" he said, still in that same whisper, while again from others of the group came those silent signals of warning and disapproval; "he's dreadful bad, an' "—with a quaver in the low voice—"we think he's a-dyin'."

There was no mistaking the look in the boy's misty eyes and the tremble in the tones. I lowered my voice in sympathetic comprehension, and only saying, "Let me come; I won't disturb him," I stepped softly toward the little company. I had thought I might be of use, knowing a good deal of animals and their ailments, but at a glance I saw it was too late. The fast-glazing eyes, though still looking up with a pathetic attempt to express appreciation of the fond care shown him by his young friends, the convulsive twitching of the little form, showed he was, as my guide had said, "a-dyin'." So I was still and silent, for I was not needed. Doggie lacked nothing; love, sympathy, sorrow, tender care, they were his in abundance.

He was not a pretty dog nor of high lineage. He was a mongrel, of yellow and white, a thin, bony, ugly little fellow. But no dog of song or story ever had truer friends. He lay across the knees of one of the boys, while the others knelt or crouched or stood around, and all watched silently and sadly the passing of the—soul? Or shall we call it instinct? It was life, at any rate, and it was fast going out. It was soon over, and very quietly. The faintest movement of the poor stump of a tail—a pitiful attempt at a wag, poor beastie—as the youngest mourner, a mite of a fellow, touched with tiny brown fingers the rough coat of the sufferer, and all was ended.

As I looked about upon the sorry little faces, the wet eyes, the quivering lips, I felt I must be dreaming. Was this a real dog, and were these boys? The little fellow whose knees had made the dying bed for the animal did not at once rise or move, though he must have been stiff

and aching from the constrained position in which for an hour he had been obliged to sit. As we lifted the limp little form from his lap, I asked him if the dog was his own.

"Oh no, ma'am," he replied, "he's a stranger to all of us. Johnny—that's my brother there—found him layin' in the road back a little way. I guess he'd been run over, an' he was real bad. So we fetched him here, an' was goin' to carry him down to the Gore, but we see he was a-dyin' fast, and we didn't take him."

"To the Gore?" I said. "What's that?"

The boy looked puzzled. "Why, the Gore," he said again. "We allers take 'em there, you know."

"I'm a stranger here," I explained, "and do not understand. Is it the name of a place?"

"Oh yes, 'm, I thought you knowed. Wilson's Gore, they call it, 'bout half a mile from here, out that way. There's jest nine families live in it, that's all. We're all Gore boys, us here; our folks live there; an' so o' course we knowed where to fetch the poor dog."

Then turning to the rest, he added, "But she can't do him no good now. Anyway, I s'pose we'd better take him over to her an' see what she says 'bout buryin' him." All signified approval, and I was more than ever puzzled.

"Does the dog belong to someone at the Gore?" I asked, but was again met with the assurance that he was a stranger, and nothing was known of his home or folks. "But why do you take him to the Gore, then?" said I.

"Why, to Anna Malann, o' course," he answered.

"Yes," said another little chap, "we allers fetch 'em to Anna Malann, even when they're dead."

By this time my friends in the carriage were growing weary of the long delay, and I was obliged to rejoin them hastily.

But I was determined to know more of this mysterious Gore, and of Anna Malann herself. At the inn a little farther on we made inquiries and obtained some information on the subject. Wilson's Gore was one of those bits of land, occasionally found even now in New England, which were left between the boundary lines of different land grants, and sometimes failed to be included in townships.

In this little spot lived nine families, as I had been told by the boys. And through the example or influence of one Anna Malann, an old woman in the place, everyone there seemed to treat dumb creatures with strange consideration. About this matter the landlord said little, but advised me to go and see for myself. "She'll like to see ye," he said, "partic'lar if you like creatur's. An' it's dreadful amusin' to hear her talk."

Of course I went. I do like "creatur's," and my curiosity and interest were strangely excited by what I had seen and heard concerning Anna Malann and her missionary work.

I had not far to go. The inn itself was in Thacherville, but the boundary line between that village and Wilson's Gore was but half a mile beyond. And the Gore once reached, the house I sought was easily recognized from the description of my landlord: "A little house that looks as if folks was movin' or cleanin' house, and sounds like a menagerie."

I knew it at once by sight and hearing both—a small house surrounded apparently by rubbish—boxes, barrels, tin cans, crates, baskets, scattered about in confusion. And out upon the warm, soft air floated strange sounds—whines, mews, barks, whinnies, chirps, squeaks, cluckings, chatterings. Yes, this surely was the abode of my home missionary. The door was open, and just within it stood a thin, pale little woman stirring with an iron spoon some mixture in a tin pan. As I approached she looked up, and I saw that she had soft brown eyes, with a certain wistful, gentle look often seen in the eyes of an animal, especially an intelligent, affectionate dog. You may think this fanciful; perhaps it is. Perhaps I was unconsciously influenced to make this comparison by what I had heard of the woman's tastes and characteristics. But this I know, that since I first saw her I can never look into the true eyes of my brave dog Larry without a quick memory of Anna Malann and her gentle face.

"Miss Malann?" I said, inquiringly, as her eyes met mine and then turned quickly and shyly away, making them more than ever like Larry's, so averse to meeting a prolonged human gaze.

"No, ma'am; my name's Ellis—Ann Ellis. Won't you walk in?"

"Why," I said, somewhat puzzled, "I thought Miss Malann lived here. Miss Anna Malann the boys called her."

She interrupted me with a smile. "Oh, the boys! Well, I guess they said Animal Ann; that's what they call me, 'cause of my setting more 'n most folks by creatur's. Don't wonder you didn't get it straight, not knowing about my queer ways and all. But come in, come in."

Animal Ann! Why, of course it was plain enough now when explained, and I looked with fresh wonder and reverence upon one whose very bearing of the title seemed to give her a sort of canonization.

I want to tell you as simply and truly as possible the story of this woman. I shall try to quote her own words in what she herself told me, and to describe without exaggeration or sentimentality what I saw of her life and work. I use the word "story," but in one way there is to be no story. This is a mere descriptive sketch. There is no plot, little

incident, and no *dénouement*. For, thank God ! the life is still being lived and the quiet, unobtrusive work going on in, and farther and farther beyond, the tiny hamlet of Wilson's Gore.

I hardly know where or how to begin. But perhaps I had best tell first one little incident which seems to mark the keynote of the whole tale.

As we were walking out that first day among the boxes, barrels, and baskets which proved to be the humble dwelling places of Animal Ann's favorites, I said:

"Why, how many animals have you here?"

She turned quickly toward me, her finger uplifted with a "Hush-h-h!" of warning. As I stared in perplexity she whispered in my ear, "They don't know they're animals; they think they're just folks."

And that gives one a pretty good notion of her ideas and her mode of treatment. I shall let her speak for herself now. She told me the story then, and I wrote it down directly afterward, while the words were fresh in my mind. And many times since then I have heard her tell it to others. For the friendship begun that day has lasted and grown, and again and again, as the summer comes, I find my way to Wilson's Gore and the little home of Animal Ann.

"I don't know exactly how it come about, my taking to dumb creatur's, as they call them—though I must say I never see one that was anyways dumb myself. I lived over to Danvers, in the east part of the State, you know. Pa was a real good man, kind to his folks, a church member, and one of the selectmen of the borough. He was brought up in the strict up-and-down old-fashioned way as to religion, and had some pretty hard notions about some things. He had a good deal of stock—horses and cows and oxen and so on—and he took good care of them, gave them plenty of food and drink and good sleeping quarters, and never beat them, or let his hired men do it. But he had views about animals that he'd picked up from his father before him, and from old Mr. Luther, his minister. I supposed they was all right, 'cause pa held them, but even when I was a mite of a girl they struck me as queer and sort of ha'sh. He was good to his stock, as I said before, but he insisted that was only just because they was useful to him and he wanted to keep them that way. He was kind to Leo, the collie dog, but he said that was because he was so handy about driving the cows and finding the sheep, and he couldn't spare him. He was dreadful good to the cats, but, according to him, that was because of their catching the rats and mice. But he was pleasant to the squirrels too, and the robins, and the brown thrashers—fed them and all—and he couldn't give no other reason for that than this—that he *wanted to*. 'But,' says he, 'animals haven't got no

rights; that's a well-known fact. The Bible don't give them any; the Church don't give them any; the catechism don't give them any. If I'm made so soft like and nervous myself that I can't see a creatur' hurt or abused without its making me uncomfortable and fidgety, why, that's my lookout. It don't go to show I'd ought to feel that way. I tell ye, if folks go to preaching that kind of doctrine, that creatur's have rights, and I'm bound to treat them as well as I do folks, why, I'll just turn about and abuse them, spite of my creepy, nervous feeling about it. Same rights as folks? Why didn't God make them folks, then?

"So he'd go on and over with such talk, and I'd listen and bother my poor little head trying to make it sound right and reasonable. 'Why ain't they folks, anyway?' I says to myself. 'What makes the difference? They act like folks: they're good or they're bad; they're lazy or industrious; they're noisy or quiet, pleasant or ugly, selfish or free-handed, peaceable or snarly. In short, they've got ways. There's no two creatur's just alike, no more than there is folks. They take sick like folks, too, and they don't like to suffer no more'n folks do; and, come to the last, they die like folks. And why does pa put them all together, and say none of them haven't got any rights?'

"Sometimes I'd ask ma—I didn't quite dast to ask pa; children didn't use to talk so free to their fathers as they do these times—I'd ask ma why animals wasn't folks, anyway. And she'd tell me 'twas 'cause of their not having souls—immortal souls. At first I used to go on and ask how folks knew creatur's hadn't got immortal souls, but she shut me up directly about that, and showed me right off that that was given up to by everybody—'twas one of the doctrines, and wasn't to be argued over; 'twas settled for good an' all. So I never brought up that part again. But I'd bother and pester ma to know why, anyway—even agreeing 'twas that way—they wasn't folks just the same, and all the more to be pitied and done good to and made much of because they didn't have everything we had—souls and all them things. So whenever I got the chance I'd treat them that way, and try to make other people do it. But I couldn't make much headway. I had two brothers and one sister, and they all followed pa and ma's lead, and didn't worry themselves about the 'lower beings,' as pa called them. Bime-by pa died, and a spell afterwards ma went too. And we four children had the farm and stock and all to divide even. Well, maybe 'twas foolish, but I'd been thinking and bothering my head so long about animals and the awful things that was always being done to them, I couldn't get on any other track. I suppose I took after pa in being soft and nervous about such things, and seemed to me there wasn't a minute of the whole living day that there wasn't something cruel and unjust and dreadful done to poor

helpless creatur's even right around me; and what must it be, take the whole world over? I says. I was nigh about crazy, and I'd seem to hear such a noise of whips swishing and sticks pounding and kicks sounding hollow against creatur's sides, and then a whining and moaning and whimpering and crying out of the beings folks calls dumb, and my ears ached and buzzed all the blessed time. I couldn't stand it anyhow. I was always a meddler and fusser, different from the rest of the family, and I made up my mind I'd got to have a finger in this pie. I talked to Mary, my sister, and to Elam and John, and tried to explain my views. I wanted—well, I don't believe I had any real settled plan laid out, and I don't wonder now they thought I'd gone clean out of my wits. But I tried to get them to let me try what I could do on the farm and in Danvers generally to make creatur's more comfortable and get people not to put upon them so. But, my ! they got dreadful worked up over it. You see, the Ellises had always been a respectable, quiet, contented kind of family, holding the same ideas from generation to generation, with nothing upsetting in their religion or politics or schooling. They'd all thought alike for a hundred years or more, and they boasted there'd never been a schismatic or a heretic or a turncoat of any sort in the whole tribe. And now to see an Ellis, and a female one, too, set up for a stirrer-up and overthrower, a sort of a horse-doctor and dog-missionary mixed up, why, they wouldn't have it. We had words, and, to make a long story short, we settled it this way: I was a sort of a mean-spirited, easy-going, anything-for-peace woman myself, and so I just told them I'd give up every bit of my share of the old farm to them three for nothing, and go off somewhere to try my plan. And they agreed to that, and let me go.

"Then I begun to look about to find the right kind of place. I wanted to see if there was such a thing as bringing over a whole community to my way of thinking. If I could be the means of getting everybody in just one town or village to try treating animals as if they was folks, why—well, 'twas something to live for, anyway. I considered and considered, and bime-by this notion came to me: I must find a small enough place so's I could work it all up before I died; the Ellises ain't a long-lived family, and I wanted dreadful bad to see the whole thing done in my lifetime. 'Why,' I says to myself, 'it would be almost like a little millennium of my own.' Then I heard one day about Wilson's Gore, and it appeared to me just what I wanted. Six families in all—that's what there was then—and not very big ones neither. I had a little money besides my share of the farm I'd give up—some left me by the Aunt Ann I was named after, so I'd got something to start with. And here I come, and here I be.

"It's a good many years now, for 'twas dreadful slow work. But it's done. Every single one of the Gore families—and, as I said before, there's nine now—has come over to my way of thinking, and yet I ain't reached the average Ellis limit of age yet. So I've got my little millenium, you see. But I must tell the whole truth and own up to one thing. I don't believe I've had much to do with it, after all. Come to think of it, I believe the Gore folks would have come to the same p'int if I hadn't been here at all. For I've never preached about it or scolded and fretted at them or anything. They must have had a leaning that way themselves, and found it all out without my help. Sometimes I wish I'd 'a' taken a harder place, with crueller folks in it; there'd have been more credit in that. For I've had an easy, comfortable time of it, after all, doing for the dogs and horses and cats that was sick or hurt or old or lost or left out some way. You see, I like them, and so it's dreadful interesting. And I like showing them to folks, too, particular the boys and girls. And they'll spend hours at a time watching me take care of them and talk to them and treat them my way. But as for preaching at them about it, or to their fathers and mothers, I hadn't got time for it. But there ain't a man or woman or a boy or girl now in the Gore that would do a cruel thing to a horse or a dog or a cow or an ox or any four-footed thing; and, what's more, they wouldn't stone a bird or break up a nest—and children do like that kind of thing, you know; and there even appears to be a feeling among the babies themselves against pulling off flies' wings and squeezing them to hear them buzz, and little amusements like that. They're terrible good children by natur', you see, and I'm afraid I'll have to move. There ain't no satisfyin' field for real missionary work here."

Before this little autobiography was ended we were walking out among the "creatur's," and I had many an object lesson to illustrate Ann Ellis's mode of treating her friends.

Such odd friends they were, but I would not wish for truer, more loyal ones. Dumb ! Why, every soft wistful eye, each pricked-up silky ear, each tail that wagged or thumped the ground at the sound of her gentle footfall, each pawing eager hoof and quivering dilated nostril, spoke clearly, sharply, out of love and trust and willingness to serve. Here in the little pasture lot grazed a blind horse; there, a little away, an old and grizzled one, passing his last days—his happiest ones, poor fellow!—in peace and comfort. There were dogs with bandaged, splintered legs, dogs that were hurt or ill, lying on soft beds in basket, box, or barrel. And there were well, active animals, dogs and cats, and others too. Some were waiting to be claimed by owners from whom they had strayed away. Others had been wilfully deserted, and had no

home but this. There was a lame hen hobbling about on an awkward wooden leg; there was a blind canary in a rough homemade cage, singing his little heart out as he heard the voice of the one he had never seen, but loved.

It was, as the landlord had said, “dreadful amusin’ ” to hear Animal Ann talk, but it was more. There was to me something strangely pathetic, touching, in the way she spoke of and to these creatures. Certainly there was in her words or tones or looks nothing that could hint to these friends of hers that she thought them anything but “folks.”

“Do you know how to talk French?” she asked, suddenly, one day. As I owned to some knowledge of the language, she said: “Oh, I’m real glad. You see, the children come over one day last month to tell me that the old monsheer, as they called him round here—him that used to learn the young folks to dance over in Danvers—was dead, and he’d left a dog unprovided for. The town had buried the old man, and the poor little creatur’ was crying herself to death over the grave. I went over with them, and we fetched her away, dreadful unwilling, but too weak from mourning and going without victuals and sleep to make much fuss. I’ve brought lots of sorrowing young things through their troubles, homesickness and lonesomeness and disappointment and grief, but I never had a worse case than this. ’Twas a poodle; Fan Shong the old man used to call her; sounds kind of Chinee, don’t it, now? And she was the miserablest being! She wouldn’t make friends, she was scary and terrible bashful, and she just about cried her eyes out after that old master of hers—an outlandish, snuff-taking, fretful little man to most folks, but the best and dearest in the world to Fan Shong. I tried hard to help her, to make her feel at home, and show her there was something to live for still, but she didn’t take any notice. I’d make a good deal of her, praise her up, and call her ‘good dog, good dog,’ but she didn’t appear to care. And then bime-by it struck me she didn’t understand; she was French, and ‘good dog’ was no more than foreign talk to her. Of course I had to do something about it or she’d ‘a’ died on my hands. I inquired about, and found there was a lady over in East Thacherville, about four miles from here, that knew some French—used to learn it to children in the academy. So I went over there. ’Twas a real hot day in July, and there’d been quite a spell of dry weather, and ’twas terrible dusty. I’d been up all the night before with Charley, the old white horse there, and didn’t feel very rugged that day, and I thought I’d never get there. But I found Miss Edwards, and she was real good, took quite an interest, and she learnt me to say ‘good dog’ in French—‘bong shang,’ you know. I practiced it over and over till I said it real good, and then I started home. Well, will you believe, time I got there it had gone clean

out of my head. You see, I'd got it mixed up with the poor dog's Chinese name, Fan Shong, and for the life of me I couldn't say it right. So back I had to go through that dust and all and learn it again. But my! it paid, for she was so pleased when I told her she was a 'bong shang,' just as her old master done it. She's bashful yet, though, and lonesome, and she'd admire to hear her native language."

You may be sure I aired my best Parisian French for the benefit of the homesick foreigner, greatly to the delight of my good old friend. Noting how careful she was lest any word of ours should hurt the feelings of her protégés, I asked her if she thought they understood what was said.

"Well, I don't really know," she answered, "and so I go on the plan of acting as if they did. It don't do any harm, you see; and just supposing they do know our language, why, they'd be dreadful cut up sometimes. So I act as I do with folks, and mind my words when they're around."

It was a good while before I became used to this peculiarity of the old woman, and I was puzzled and startled again and again by a warning word, look, or gesture when about to speak freely of those about us. "That looks like a good hunting dog," I said one day, pointing out a fine Irish setter near by. A significant look from Ann, a loudly spoken "Ain't he a nice dog? Yes, Jack's a good dog"—which words set the silky tail of golden-brown waving like a banner—and then the old woman whispered in my ear: "He's gunshy, poor fellow. He can't help it; it's born in him. He's tried and tried, but he says he can't stand it. Just the very sight of a gun of any sort, loaded or not, scares him to death. That's how I got him. Jim Merrill had him, and was bound to train that trick out of him. He beat him till he 'most killed him, but it only made him worse. And so I bought him."

I shall never forget the confusion and shame which overwhelmed me one day at a reproof—a pretty sharp one—from the good old philanthropist. Peering out at us from behind a shed was the oddest creature. It was intended, doubtless, for a cat, but was such a caricature of one. One ear stood sharply erect, the other lopped limply down; the eyes, because of an injury done to one of them, had a chronic squint; and there was a twist upward to each corner of the wide mouth that suggested the grin of the proverbial cat of Cheshire. It was irresistible, and I—laughed. Animal Ann clutched my arm. "Stop laughing," she whispered, sharply, "or if you can't hold it in, go away." I was sobered at once. "Poor Jinny," said the old woman, after we had left the spot, "she's terrible homely, and she knows it as well as we do. Nobody'll have her, she looks so bad. And the worst of it is she's just aching to be

made much of and coddled. There's the lovingest heart in that poor outlandish-looking body. She's real touchy about her looks, particular her eyes—maybe you took notice there's a mite of a cast in them—and I do all I can to make her forget about it."

The good woman even attributed to these animals theological creeds of their own, or rather, perhaps, adherence to those of the particular sect to which their former masters or owners belonged. "Don't say anything about Jews," she once whispered, as we drew near the rough kennel of a gaunt yellow cur; "he don't know any other religion; he's been with them all his days. I took him after Miss Levy died. He set everything by the family, and I don't want him to think we disapprove of their beliefs."

"I suppose I need not ask you," I said, one day, "with your views of animals and their being like folks, if you think there's a future for them after death?"

To my surprise, the old woman shook her head sadly, and the soft brown eyes grew moist. "No," she said, in a low, mournful voice, "I'm afraid there's no chance of that. I've give it up. I did hold to it as long as I could, and it 'most broke my heart to let it go. But so many of the folks I look up to tell me it isn't so that I've had to give up that p'int. Even Elder Peters, that's so fond of dogs and horses himself, he always said there wasn't any chance of meeting them anywhere in the next world; and Dr. Church held that too; and good old Mis' Holcombe, that left money to take care of destitute cats. They was all one way, proved it from the Scriptures, you know—'like the beasts that perish,' and all that. They all say there ain't a single word in the Bible that gives them a reasonable hope. There's most everything else spoke of as being there—folks and angels and martyrs and saints and trees and flowers and fruit and streams and precious stones. But nothing about creatur's, except—well, sometimes I think there's a chance for white horses—just a chance."

"For white horses!" I exclaimed, in amazement.

"Yes; in Revelation, speaking about heaven and the saints, it tells about their being dressed in white robes and riding on white horses. But there's another—a dreadful verse in that book—I never like to think of it. After telling all the beautiful things that's inside of heaven, it says, 'But without are dogs.' Now ain't that a terrible mournful pictur'? It's as if the other animals all give up when they was told there wasn't any place for them up there, and just died for good, instincts and all—if you don't want to call them souls—but dogs, why, they just couldn't do it; they must follow on after their masters, room or no room. And so I always seem to see them hanging about the door, waiting and waiting,

getting a peek in when it opens to let somebody go inside, and maybe catching sight of their masters—oh! I can't stand it, anyhow. I wish it wasn't writ there, 'Without are dogs.' ”

In vain I tried to show the poor woman that the dog of Revelation, banished from bliss with murderers, idolaters, and others of the wicked, was not one of her four-footed friends. She had looked at the harrowing vision too long to be able to banish it at once.

“But there's one thing I won't give in to,” she said, “and that is that Scriptur' don't go to show that folks 'd oughter be kind and merciful to creatur's. It does—I say it does. There's heaps and heaps of things that shows it. Of course there's that one about the righteous man regarding the life of his beast; but then some might say that was because he needed the beast and wanted its work. But there's lots of passages besides that. Why, how beautiful it always speaks about sheep and lambs! There ain't anything better it can find to liken God to than a shepherd, and the tenderest kind of one, too. Why, it says He gathers the lambs up in His arms and carries them in His bosom; it tells how He makes them lay down in green pastures, and leads them out beside the still waters. And the Master, too, He calls Himself the Good Shepherd, and then explains to the folks what a good shepherd is, and how he has names for all his sheep and knows them all, and how they'll follow him all about and know his voice. And it says that he'll even give his own life for his sheep—any good shepherd will, he sets so much by them. It stands to reason no one could treat sheep and lambs cruel anyway if they think much of the Bible. And telling people not to aggravate the oxen by muzzling them up while they're threshing out the corn, and not to do such an unnat'ral, cruel kind of thing as to seethe a kid in its mother's milk. And where it tells you in case you come across a bird's nest on the ground or up in a tree, with the mother bird setting on her eggs or cuddling her young ones, to be sure and not hurt her, but let her go. And the talking so much about creatur's, how smart and how knowing, and how quick and how busy, and how bold and how handsome! There's Solomon, he can't say enough about the ants being so forehanded and laying up their food, and the conies building in the rocks, and the greyhound, which is so 'comely in going.' And in Job it goes on about the fine looks and the strength and the high spirit of horses, pawing the ground and smelling the battle, and all. And I'm sure our Master when He was here loved the birds, and talked about them, and spoke of His Father's feeding them and keeping count of the sparrows. And He said, however strict folks was about keeping Sunday, any one would help a creatur' that fell into a hole, or got hurt any way, that day or any other. Oh, I tell ye the whole gist of Scriptur's that way, to my

thinking, even if it don't say up and down in big capitals, 'Don't beat your horses or kick your dogs.' And Solomon says one real smart thing about my idee of there not being so much difference, after all, 'twixt folks and creatur's. Wait a minute, and let me get the old Bible and read it to you. Here, now: 'For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast,' and so on. Ain't that good? And him so wise, you know!"

"It must be a sad thought," I said to her once, "that you will never see these animal friends in the next world." It was a cruel thing to say, under the circumstances, but I did not stop to think.

A mist clouded the soft, doglike brown eyes, as they met mine for an instant and then turned quickly away. "It's dreadful," she said, in a low, hushed tone—"dreadful. It's wicked, I know, to say so, but—I couldn't be happy up there and them outside. Me and all the real folks, that's had everything in this world—rights, and laws to protect their rights, and—and—souls—us all inside heaven, and them that's been put upon and worried and tortur'd all their days, them outside of it all, oh, I couldn't stand it—I know I couldn't! So—well—maybe I sha'n't be there myself." She went on hurriedly, as if in response to some expression she thought my face might wear: "Not that I'm giving up my religion. That's a sight of comfort to me—more'n anything else, I guess. But, you see, folks generally are so busy saving their own souls and other people's—heathen's and all—they can't attend to righting the awful wrongs done to creatur's, and it's nat'ral, I know. But I've got a leaning that way, and I'm so made I seem to know how to help animals and coax folks to be good to them. So I just tell God right out all about it—that I feel I must give up my whole life, day in and day out, to helping and comforting these creatur's He's made, and made so like folks in everything but just not having souls. And I tell Him"—she spoke softly and reverently—"I tell Him I love Him and want to serve Him, and I'm on his side, and will be to my dying day. But I've got such a terrible aching and burning over the things done to these creatur's that I can't attend to the other things folks tell me is the highest, most important ones. I haven't got time for all the meetings—the sewing society and missionary concerts and temperance meetings and teachers' meetings and the anti-smoking society, and all those stated means, as they call them. I'm drove day and night, looking up suffering creatur's, fetching home them that's lost, nursing the sick, chirking up the lonesome and homesick. Why, you wouldn't believe how full my hands be. And so I tell Him plain, but humble and respectful, that if He thinks

best to say, because I give up the work and duty of a professor, I must give up the rewards too, why, I've nothing to say. He knows best, understanding the whole case, and I know He'll do right. So I just go on with what I've got to do for these poor things as if I was just one of them, soul lacking and all. And they think I am."

I told you I had no story, nothing but a picture—poorly drawn, I know—of one woman and her work and ways. I do not even point a moral. Maybe there is none. It is for you to say.

The Lady of Little Fishing



CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON



IT WAS AN ISLAND in Lake Superior.

I beached my canoe there about four o'clock in the afternoon, for the wind was against me and a high sea running. The late summer of 1850, and I was coasting along the south shore of the great lake, hunting, fishing, and camping on the beach, under the delusion that in that way I was living "close to the great heart of nature"—whatever that may mean. Lord Bacon got up the phrase; I suppose he knew. Pulling the boat high and dry on the sand with the comfortable reflection that here were no tides to disturb her with their goings-out and comings-in, I strolled through the woods on a tour of exploration, expecting to find bluebells, Indian pipes, juniper rings, perhaps a few agates alongshore, possibly a bird or two for company. I found a town.

It was deserted; but nonetheless a town, with three streets, residences, a meetinghouse, gardens, a little park, and an attempt at a fountain. Ruins are rare in the New World; I took off my hat. "Hail, homes of the past!" I said. (I cultivated the habit of thinking aloud when I was living close to the great heart of nature.) "A human voice resounds through your arches" (there were no arches—logs won't arch, but never mind) "once more, a human hand touches your venerable walls, a human foot presses your deserted hearthstones." I then selected the best half of the meetinghouse for my camp, knocked down one of the

homes for fuel, and kindled a glorious bonfire in the park. "Now that you are illuminated with joy, O Ruin," I remarked, "I will go down to the beach and bring up my supplies. It is long since I have had a roof over my head; I promise you to stay until your last residence is well burned; then I will make a final cup of coffee with the meetinghouse itself, and depart in peace, leaving your poor old bones buried in decent ashes."

The ruin made no objection, and I took up my abode there; the roof of the meetinghouse was still watertight (which is an advantage when the great heart of nature grows wet). I kindled a fire on the sacerdotal hearth, cooked my supper, ate it in leisurely comfort, and then stretched myself on a blanket to enjoy an evening pipe of peace, listening meanwhile to the sounding of the wind through the great pine trees. There was no door to my sanctuary, but I had the cozy far end; the island was uninhabited, there was not a boat in sight at sunset, nothing could disturb me unless it might be a ghost. Presently a ghost came in.

It did not wear the traditional gray tarlatan armor of Hamlet's father, the only ghost with whom I am well acquainted; this specter was clad in substantial deerskin garments, and carried a gun and loaded game bag. It came forward to my hearth, hung up its gun, opened its game bag, took out some birds, and inspected them gravely.

"Fat?" I inquired.

"They'll do," replied the specter, and forthwith set to work preparing them for the coals. I smoked on in silence. The specter seemed to be a skilled cook, and after deftly broiling its supper, it offered me a share; I accepted. It swallowed a huge mouthful and crunched with its teeth; the spell was broken, and I knew it for a man of flesh and blood.

He gave his name as Reuben, and proved himself an excellent camping companion; in fact, he shot all the game, caught all the fish, made all the fires, and cooked all the food for us both. I proposed to him to stay and help me burn up the ruin, with the condition that when the last timber of the meetinghouse was consumed, we should shake hands and depart, one to the east, one to the west, without a backward glance. "In that way we shall not infringe upon each other's personality," I said.

"Agreed," replied Reuben.

He was a man of between fifty and sixty years, while I was on the sunny side of thirty; he was reserved, I was always generously affable; he was an excellent cook, while I—well, I wasn't; he was taciturn, and so, in payment for the work he did, I entertained him with conversation, or rather monologue, in my most brilliant style. It took only two weeks to burn up the town, burned we never so slowly; at last it came

the turn of the meetinghouse, which now stood by itself in the vacant clearing. It was a cool September day; we cooked breakfast with the roof, dinner with the sides, supper with the odds and ends, and then applied a torch to the framework. Our last campfire was a glorious one. We lay stretched on our blankets, smoking and watching the glow. "I wonder, now, who built the old shanty," I said in a musing tone.

"Well," replied Reuben, slowly, "if you really want to know, I will tell you. I did."

"You!"

"Yes."

"You didn't do it alone?"

"No; there were about forty of us."

"Here?"

"Yes; here at Little Fishing."

"Little Fishing?"

"Yes; Little Fishing Island. That is the name of the place."

"How long ago was this?"

"Thirty years."

"Hunting and trapping, I suppose?"

"Yes; for the Northwest and Hudson Bay Companies."

"Wasn't a meetinghouse an unusual accompaniment?"

"Most unusual."

"Accounted for in this case by—"

"A woman."

"Ah!" I said in a tone of relish, "then of course there is a story?"

"There is."

"Out with it, comrade. I scarcely expected to find the woman and her story up here; but since the irrepressible creature would come, out with her by all means. She shall grace our last pipe together, the last timber of our meetinghouse, our last night on Little Fishing. The dawn will see us far from each other, to meet no more this side heaven. Speak then, O comrade mine! I am in one of my rare listening moods!"

I stretched myself at ease and waited. Reuben was a long time beginning, but I was too indolent to urge him. At length he spoke.

"They were a rough set here at Little Fishing, all the worse for being all white men; most of the other camps were full of half-breeds and Indians. The island had been a station away back in the early days of the Hudson Bay Company; it was a station for the Northwest Company while that lasted; then it went back to the Hudson, and stayed there until the company moved its forces farther to the north. It was not at any time a regular post, only a camp for the hunters. The post was farther down the lake. O, but those were wild days! You think you

know the wilderness, boy; but you know nothing, absolutely nothing. It makes me laugh to see the airs of you city gentlemen with your fine guns, improved fishing tackle, elaborate paraphernalia, as though you were going to wed the whole forest, floating up and down the lake for a month or two in the summer! You should have seen the hunters of Little Fishing going out gaily when the mercury was down twenty degrees below zero, for a week in the woods. You should have seen the trappers wading through the hard snow, breast high, in the gray dawn, visiting the traps and hauling home the prey. There were all kinds of men here, Scotch, French, English, and American; all classes, the high and the low, the educated and the ignorant; all sorts, the lazy and the hard-working. One thing only they all had in common—badness. Some had fled to the wilderness to escape the law, others to escape order; some had chosen the wild life because of its wildness, others had drifted into it from sheer lethargy. This far northern border did not attract the plodding emigrant, the respectable settler. Little Fishing held none of that trash, only a reckless set of fellows who carried their lives in their hands, and tossed them up, if need be, without a second thought.”

“And other people’s lives without a third,” I suggested.

“Yes; if they deserved it. But nobody whined; there wasn’t any nonsense here. The men went hunting and trapping, got the furs ready for the bateaux, ate when they were hungry, drank when they were thirsty, slept when they were sleepy, played cards when they felt like it, and got angry and knocked each other down whenever they chose. As I said before, there wasn’t any nonsense at Little Fishing—until *she* came.”

“Ah! the she!”

“Yes, the Lady—our Lady, as we called her. Thirty-one years ago; how long it seems!”

“And well it may,” I said. “Why, comrade, I wasn’t born then!”

This stupendous fact seemed to strike me more than my companion; he went on with his story as though I had not spoken.

“One October evening, four of the boys had got into a row over the cards; the rest of us had come out of our wigwams to see the fun, and were sitting around on the stumps, chaffing them, and laughing; the campfire was burning in front, lighting up the woods with a red glow for a short distance, and making the rest doubly black all around. There we all were, as I said before, quite easy and comfortable, when suddenly there appeared among us, as though she had dropped from heaven, a woman!

“She was tall and slender, the firelight shone full on her pale face and dove-colored dress, her golden hair was folded back under a little

white cap, and a white kerchief lay over her shoulders; she looked spotless. I stared; I could scarcely believe my eyes; none of us could. There was not a white woman west of the Sault Ste. Marie. The four fellows at the table sat as if transfixed; one had his partner by the throat, the other two were disputing over a point in the game. The lily lady glided up to their table, gathered the cards in her white hands, slowly, steadily, without pause or trepidation before their astonished eyes, and then, coming back, she threw the cards into the center of the glowing fire. 'Ye shall not play away your souls,' she said in a clear, sweet voice. 'Is not the game sin? And its reward death?' And then, immediately, she gave us a sermon, the like of which was never heard before; no argument, no doctrine, just simple, pure entreaty. 'For the love of God,' she ended, stretching out her hands toward our silent, gazing group—'for the love of God, my brothers, try to do better.'

"We did try; but it was not for the love of God. Neither did any of us feel like brothers.

"She did not give any name; we called her simply our Lady, and she accepted the title. A bundle carefully packed in birch bark was found on the beach. 'Is this yours?' asked black Andy.

"'It is,' replied the Lady; and removing his hat, the black-haired giant carried the package reverently inside her lodge. For we had given her our best wigwam, and fenced it off with pine saplings so that it looked like a miniature fortress. The Lady did not suggest this stockade; it was our own idea, and with one accord we worked at it like beavers, and hung up a gate with a ponderous bolt inside.

"'Mais, ze can nevere farsen eet wiz her leetle fingares,' said Frenchy, a sallow little wretch with a turn for handicraft; so he contrived a small spring which shot the bolt into place with a touch. The Lady lived in her fortress; three times a day the men carried food to her door, and, after tapping gently, withdrew again, stumbling over each other in their haste. The Flying Dutchman, a stolid Holland-born sailor, was our best cook, and the pans and kettles were generally left to him; but now all wanted to try their skill, and the results were extraordinary.

"'She's never touched that pudding, now,' said Nightingale Jack, discontentedly, as his concoction of berries and paste came back from the fortress door.

"'She will starve soon, I think,' remarked the Doctor, calmly; 'to my certain knowledge she has not had an eatable meal for four days.' And he lighted a fresh pipe. This was an aside, and the men pretended not to hear it; but the pans were relinquished to the Dutchman from that time forth.

"The Lady wore always her dove-colored robe, and little white cap, through whose muslin we could see the glimmer of her golden hair. She came and went among us like a spirit; she knew no fear; she turned our life inside out, nor shrank from its vileness. It seemed as though she was not of earth, so utterly impersonal was her interest in us, so heavenly her pity. She took up our sins, one by one, as an angel might; she pleaded with us for our own lost souls, she spared us not, she held not back one grain of denunciation, one iota of future punishment. Sometimes, for days, we would not see her; then, at twilight, she would glide out among us, and, standing in the light of the campfire, she would preach to us as though inspired. We listened to her; I do not mean that we were one whit better at heart, but still we listened to her, always. It was a wonderful sight, that lily face under the pine trees, that spotless woman standing alone in the glare of the fire, while around her lay forty evil-minded, lawless men, not one of whom but would have killed his neighbor for so much as a disrespectful thought of her.

"So strange was her coming, so almost supernatural her appearance in this far forest, that we never wondered over its cause, but simply accepted it as a sort of miracle; your thoroughly irreligious men are always superstitious. Not one of us would have asked a question, and we should never have known her story had she not herself told it to us; not immediately, not as though it was of any importance, but quietly, briefly, and candidly as a child. She came, she said, from Scotland, with a band of God's people. She had always been in one house, a religious institution of some kind, sewing for the poor when her strength allowed it, but generally ill, and suffering much from pain in her head, often kept under the influence of soothing medicines for days together. She had no father or mother, she was only one of this band; and when they decided to send out missionaries to America, she begged to go, although but a burden; the sea voyage restored her health; she grew, she said, in strength and in grace, and her heart was as the heart of a lion. Word came to her from on high that she should come up into the northern lake-country and preach the gospel there; the band were going to the verdant prairies. She left them in the night, taking nothing but her clothing; a friendly vessel carried her north; she had preached the gospel everywhere. At the Sault the priests had driven her out, but nothing fearing, she went on into the wilderness, and so, coming part of the way in canoes, part of the way alongshore, she had reached our far island. Marvelous kindness had she met with, she said; the Indians, the half-breeds, the hunters, and the trappers had all received her, and helped her on her way from camp to camp. They had listened to her words also. At Portage they had begged her to stay through the winter,

and offered to build her a little church for Sunday services. Our men looked at each other. Portage was the worst camp on the lake, notorious for its fights; it was a mining settlement.

“‘But I told them I must journey on toward the west,’ continued our Lady. ‘I am called to visit every camp on this shore before the winter sets in; I must soon leave you also.’

“The men looked at each other again; the Doctor was spokesman. ‘But, my Lady,’ he said, ‘the next post is Fort William, two hundred and thirty-five miles away on the north shore.’

“‘It is almost November; the snow will soon be six and ten feet deep. The Lady could never travel through it—could she, now?’ said Black Andy, who had begun eagerly, but in his embarrassment at the sound of his own voice, now turned to Frenchy and kicked him covertly into answering.

“‘Nevare!’ replied the Frenchman; he had intended to place his hand upon his heart to give emphasis to his word, but the Lady turned her calm eyes that way, and his grimy paw fell, its gallantry wilted.

“‘I thought there was one more camp—at Burnt-Wood River,’ said our Lady in a musing tone. The men looked at each other a third time; there was a camp there, and they all knew it. But the Doctor was equal to the emergency.

“‘That camp, my Lady,’ he said gravely—‘that camp no longer exists!’ Then he whispered hurriedly to the rest of us, ‘It will be an easy job to clean it out, boys. We’ll send over a party tonight; it’s only thirty-five miles.’

“We recognized superior genius; the Doctor was our oldest and deepest sinner. But what struck us most was his anxiety to make good his lie. Had it then come to this—that the Doctor told the truth?

“The next day we all went to work to build our Lady a church; in a week it was completed. There goes its last crossbeam now into the fire; it was a solid piece of work, wasn’t it? It has stood this climate thirty years. I remember the first Sunday service: we all washed, and dressed ourselves in the best we had; we scarcely knew each other, we were so fine. The Lady was pleased with the church, but yet she had not said she would stay all winter; we were still anxious. How she preached to us that day! We had made a screen of young spruces set in boxes, and her figure stood out against the dark green background like a thing of light. Her silvery voice rang through the log temple, her face seemed to us like a star. She had no color in her cheeks at any time; her dress, too, was colorless. Although gentle, there was an iron inflexibility about her slight, erect form. We felt, as we saw her standing there, that if need be she would walk up to the lion’s jaws, the cannon’s mouth,

with a smile. She took a little book from her pocket and read to us a hymn—"O come, all ye faithful," the old 'Adeste Fideles.' Some of us knew it; she sang, and gradually, shamefacedly, voices joined in. It was a sight to see Nightingale Jack solemnly singing away about 'choirs of angels'; but it was a treat to hear him, too—what a voice he had! Then our Lady prayed, kneeling down on the little platform in front of the evergreens, clasping her hands, and lifting her eyes to heaven. We did not know what to do at first, but the Doctor gave us a severe look and bent his head, and we all followed his lead.

"When service was over and the door opened, we found that it had been snowing; we could not see out through the windows because white cloth was nailed over them in place of glass.

"Now, my Lady, you will have to stay with us," said the Doctor. We all gathered around with eager faces.

"Do you really believe that it will be for the good of your souls?" asked the sweet voice.

"The Doctor believed—for us all.

"Do you really hope?"

"The Doctor hoped.

"Will you try to do your best?"

"The Doctor was sure he would.

"I will," answered the Flying Dutchman, earnestly. 'I moost not fry de meat any more; I moost broil!'

"For we had begged him for months to broil, and he had obstinately refused; broil represented the good, and fry the evil, to his mind; he came out for the good according to his light; but nonetheless did we fall upon him behind the Lady's back, and cuff him into silence.

"She stayed with us all winter. You don't know what the winters are up here; steady, bitter cold for seven months, thermometer always below, the snow dry as dust, the air like a knife. We built a compact chimney for our Lady, and we cut cords of wood into small, light sticks, easy for her to lift, and stacked them in her shed; we lined her lodge with skins, and we made oil from bear's fat and rigged up a kind of lamp for her. We tried to make candles, I remember, but they would not run straight; they came out humpbacked and sidling, and burned themselves to wick in no time. Then we took to improving the town. We had lived in all kinds of huts and lean-to shanties; now nothing would do but regular log houses. If it had been summer, I don't know what we might not have run to in the way of piazzas and fancy steps; but with the snow five feet deep, all we could accomplish was a plain, square log house, and even that took our whole force. The only way to keep the peace was

to have all the houses exactly alike; we laid out the three streets, and built the houses, all facing the meetinghouse, just as you found them."

"And where was the Lady's lodge?" I asked, for I recalled no stockaded fortress, large or small.

My companion hesitated a moment. Then he said abruptly, "It was torn down."

"Torn down!" I repeated. "Why, what—"

Reuben waved his hand with a gesture that silenced me, and went on with his story. It came to me then for the first time, that he was pursuing the current of his own thoughts rather than entertaining me. I turned to look at him with a new interest. I had talked to him for two weeks, in rather a patronizing way; could it be that affairs were now, at this last moment, reversed?

"It took us almost all winter to build those houses," pursued Reuben. "At one time we neglected the hunting and trapping to such a degree, that the Doctor called a meeting and expressed his opinion. Ours was a voluntary camp, in a measure, but still we had formally agreed to get a certain amount of skins ready for the bateaux by early spring; this agreement was about the only real bond of union between us. Those whose houses were not completed scowled at the Doctor.

"'Do you suppose I'm going to live like an Injun when the other fellows has regular houses?' inquired Black Andy, with a menacing air.

"'By no means,' replied the Doctor, blandly. 'My plan is this: build at night.'

"'At night?'

"'Yes; by the light of pine fires.'

"We did. After that, we faithfully went out hunting and trapping as long as daylight lasted, and then, after supper, we built up huge fires of pine logs, and went to work on the next house. It was a strange picture: the forest deep in snow, black with night, the red glow of the great fires, and our moving figures working on as complacently as though daylight, balmy air, and the best of tools were ours.

"The Lady liked our industry. She said our new houses showed that the 'new cleanliness of our inner man required a cleaner tabernacle for the outer.' I don't know about our inner man, but our outer was certainly much cleaner.

"One day the Flying Dutchman made one of his unfortunate remarks. 'De boys t'inks you'll like dem better in nize houses,' he announced when, happening to pass the fortress, he found the Lady standing at her gate gazing at the work of the preceding night. Several of the men were near enough to hear him, but too far off to kick him into

silence as usual; but they glared at him instead. The Lady looked at the speaker with her dreamy, far-off eyes.

"‘De boys t’inks you like dem,’ began the Dutchman again, thinking she did not comprehend; but at that instant he caught the combined glare of the six eyes, and stopped abruptly, not at all knowing what was wrong, but sure there was something.

"‘Like them,’ repeated the Lady, dreamily; ‘yea, I do like them. Nay, more, I love them. Their souls are as dear to me as the souls of brothers.’

"‘Say, Frenchy, have you got a sister?’ said Nightingale Jack, confidentially, that evening.

"‘Mais oui,’ said Frenchy.

"‘You think all creation of her, I suppose?’

"‘We fight like four cats and one dog; *she* is the cats,’ said the Frenchman concisely.

"‘You don’t say so!’ replied Jack. ‘Now, I never had a sister—but I thought perhaps—’ He paused, and the sentence remained unfinished.

"‘The Nightingale and I were housemates. We sat late over our fire not long after that; I gave a gigantic yawn. ‘This lifting logs half the night is enough to kill one,’ I said, getting out my jug. ‘Sing something, Jack. It’s a long time since I’ve heard anything but hymns.’

"‘Jack always went off as easily as a musicbox: you had only to wind him up; the jug was the key. I soon had him in full blast. He was giving out

‘The minute gun at sea,—the minute gun at sea,’

with all the pathos of his tenor voice, when the door burst open and the whole population rushed in upon us.

"‘What do you mean by shouting this way, in the middle of the night?’

"‘Shut up your howling, Jack.’

"‘How do you suppose anyone can sleep?’

"‘It’s a disgrace to the camp!’

"‘Now then, gentlemen,’ I replied, for my blood was up (whiskey, perhaps), ‘is this my house, or isn’t it? If I want music, I’ll have it. Time was when you were not so particular.’

"‘It was the first word of rebellion. The men looked at each other, then at me.

"‘I’ll go and ask her if she objects,’ I continued, boldly.

"‘No, no. You shall not.’

“ ‘Let him go,’ said the Doctor, who stood smoking his pipe on the outskirts of the crowd. ‘It is just as well to have that point settled now. The Minute Gun at Sea is a good moral song in its way—a sort of marine missionary affair.’

“So I started, the others followed; we all knew that the Lady watched late; we often saw the glimmer of her lamp far on toward morning. It was burning now. The gate was fastened, I knocked; no answer. I knocked again, and yet a third time; still, silence. The men stood off at a little distance and waited. ‘She shall answer,’ I said angrily, and going around to the side where the stockade came nearer to the wall of the lodge, I knocked loudly on the close-set saplings. For answer I thought I heard a low moan; I listened, it came again. My anger vanished, and with a mighty bound I swung myself up to the top of the stockade, sprung down inside, ran around, and tried the door. It was fastened; I burst it open and entered. There, by the light of the hanging lamp, I saw the Lady on the floor, apparently dead. I raised her in my arms; her heart was beating faintly, but she was unconscious. I had seen many fainting fits; this was something different; the limbs were rigid. I laid her on the low couch, loosened her dress, bathed her head and face in cold water, and wrenched up one of the warm hearthstones to apply to her feet. I did not hesitate; I saw that it was a dangerous case, something like a trance or an ‘ecstasis.’ Somebody must attend to her, and there were only men to choose from. Then why not I?

“I heard the others talking outside; they could not understand the delay; but I never heeded, and kept on my work. To tell the truth, I had studied medicine, and felt a genuine enthusiasm over a rare case. Once my patient opened her eyes and looked at me, then she lapsed away again into unconsciousness in spite of all my efforts. At last the men outside came in, angry and suspicious; they had broken down the gate. There we all stood, the whole forty of us, around the deathlike form of our Lady.

“What a night it was! To give her air, the men camped outside in the snow with a line of pickets in whispering distance from each other from the bed to their anxious group. Two were detailed to help me—the Doctor (whose title was a sarcastic D. D.) and Jimmy, a gentle little man, excellent at bandaging broken limbs. Every vial in the camp was brought in—astonishing lotions, drops, and balms; each man produced something; they did their best, poor fellows, and wore out the night with their anxiety. At dawn our Lady revived suddenly, thanked us all, and assured us that she felt quite well again; the trance was over. ‘It was my old enemy,’ she said, ‘the old illness of Scotland, which I hoped had

left me forever. But I am thankful that it is no worse; I have come out of it with a clear brain. Sing a hymn of thankfulness for me, dear friends, before you go.'

"Now, we sang on Sunday in the church; but then she led us, and we had a kind of an idea that after all she did not hear us. But now, who was to lead us? We stood awkwardly around the bed, and shuffled our hats in our uneasy fingers. The Doctor fixed his eyes upon the Nightingale; Jack saw it and cowered. 'Begin,' said the Doctor in a soft voice; but gripping him in the back at the same time with an ominous clutch.

" 'I don't know the words,' faltered the unhappy Nightingale.

" 'Now thank we all our God,
With hearts and hands and voices,'

began the Doctor, and repeated Luther's hymn with perfect accuracy from beginning to end. 'What will happen next? The Doctor knows hymns!' we thought in profound astonishment. But the Nightingale had begun, and gradually our singers joined in; I doubt whether the grand old choral was ever sung by such a company before or since. There was never any further question, by the way, about that minute gun at sea; it stayed at sea as far as we were concerned.

"Spring came, the faltering spring of Lake Superior. I won't go into my own story, but such as it was, the spring brought it back to me with new force. I wanted to go—and yet I didn't. 'Where,' do you ask? To see her, of course—a woman, the most beautiful—well, never mind all that. To be brief, I loved her; she scorned me; I thought I had learned to hate her—but—I wasn't sure about it now. I kept myself aloof from the others and gave up my heart to the old sweet, bitter memories; I did not even go to church on Sundays. But all the rest went; our Lady's influence was as great as ever. I could hear them singing; they sang better now that they could have the door open; the pent-up feeling used to stifle them. The time for the bateaux drew near, and I noticed that several of the men were hard at work packing the furs in bales, a job usually left to the *voyageurs* who came with the boats. 'What's that for?' I asked.

" 'You don't suppose we're going to have those bateaux rascals camping on Little Fishing, do you?' said Black Andy, scornfully. 'Where are your wits, Reub?'

"And they packed every skin, rafted them all over to the mainland, and waited there patiently for days, until the train of slow boats came along and took off the bales; then they came back in triumph. 'Now we're secure for another six months,' they said, and began to lay out a

park, and gardens for every house. The Lady was fond of flowers; the whole town burst into blossom. The Lady liked green grass; all the clearing was soon turfed over like a lawn. The men tried the ice-cold lake every day, waiting anxiously for the time when they could bathe. There was no end to their cleanliness; Black Andy had grown almost white again, and Frenchy's hair shone like oiled silk.

"The Lady stayed on, and all went well. But, gradually, there came a discovery. The Lady was changing—had changed! Gradually, slowly, but nonetheless distinctly to the eyes that knew her every eyelash. A little more hair was visible over the white brow, there was a faint color in the cheeks, a quicker step; the clear eyes were sometimes downcast now, the steady voice softer, the words at times faltering. In the early summer the white cap vanished, and she stood among us crowned only with her golden hair; one day she was seen through her open door sewing on a white robe! The men noted all these things silently; they were even a little troubled as at something they did not understand, something beyond their reach. Was she planning to leave them?

" 'It's my belief she's getting ready to ascend right up into heaven,' said Salem.

"Salem was a little 'wanting,' as it is called, and the men knew it; still, his words made an impression. They watched the Lady with an awe which was almost superstitious; they were troubled, and knew not why. But the Lady bloomed on. I did not pay much attention to all this; but I could not help hearing it. My heart was moody, full of its own sorrows; I secluded myself more and more. Gradually I took to going off into the mainland forests for days on solitary hunting expeditions. The camp went on its way rejoicing; the men succeeded, after a world of trouble, in making a fountain which actually played, and they glorified themselves exceedingly. The life grew quite pastoral. There was talk of importing a cow from the East, and a messenger was sent to the Sault for certain choice supplies against the coming winter. But, in the late summer, the whisper went round again that the Lady had changed, this time for the worse. She looked ill, she drooped from day to day; the new life that had come to her vanished, but her former life was not restored. She grew silent and sad, she strayed away by herself through the woods, she scarcely noticed the men who followed her with anxious eyes. Time passed, and brought with it an undercurrent of trouble, suspicion, and anger. Everything went on as before; not one habit, not one custom was altered; both sides seemed to shrink from the first change, however slight. The daily life of the camp was outwardly the same, but brooding trouble filled every heart. There was no open

discussion, men talked apart in twos and threes; a gloom rested over everything, but no one said, 'What is the matter?'

"There was a man among us—I have not said much of the individual characters of our party, but this man was one of the least esteemed, or rather liked; there was not much esteem of any kind at Little Fishing. Little was known about him; although the youngest man in the camp, he was a mooning, brooding creature, with brown hair and eyes and a melancholy face. He wasn't hearty and whole-souled, and yet he wasn't an out-and-out rascal; he wasn't a leader, and yet he wasn't follower either. He wouldn't be; he was like a third horse, always. There was no goodness about him; don't go to fancying that that was the reason the men did not like him, he was as bad as they were, every inch! He never shirked his work, and they couldn't get a handle on him anywhere; but he was just—unpopular. The why and the wherefore are of no consequence now. Well, do you know what was the suspicion that hovered over the camp? It was this: our Lady loved that man!

"It took three months for all to see it, and yet never a word was spoken. All saw, all heard; but they might have been blind and deaf for any sign they gave. And the Lady drooped more and more.

"September came, the fifteenth; the Lady lay on her couch, pale and thin; the door was open and a bell stood beside her, but there was no line of pickets whispering tidings of her state to an anxious group outside. The turf in the three streets had grown yellow for want of water, the flowers in the little gardens had drooped and died, the fountain was choked with weeds, and the interiors of the houses were all untidy. It was Sunday, and near the hour for service; but the men lounged about, dingy and unwashed.

" 'A'n't you going to church?' said Salem, stopping at the door of one of the houses; he was dressed in his best, with a flower in his buttonhole.

" 'See him now! See the fool,' said Black Andy. 'He's going to church, he is! And where's the minister, Salem? Answer me that!'

" 'Why—in the church, I suppose,' replied Salem, vacantly.

" 'No, she a'n't; not she! She's at home, a-weeping, and a-wailing, and a-ger-nashing of her teeth,' replied Andy with bitter scorn.

" 'What for?' said Salem.

" 'What for? Why, that's the joke! Hear him, boys; he wants to know what for!'

"The loungers laughed—a loud, reckless laugh.

" 'Well, I'm going anyway,' said Salem, looking wonderingly from one to the other; he passed on and entered the church.

"'I say, boys, let's have a high old time,' cried Andy, savagely. 'Let's go back to the old way and have a jolly Sunday. Let's have out the jugs and the cards and be free again!'"

"The men hesitated; ten months and more of law and order held them back.

"'What are you afraid of?' said Andy. 'Not of a canting hypocrite, I hope. She's fooled us long enough, I say. Come on!' He brought out a table and stools, and produced the long-unused cards and a jug of whiskey. 'Strike up, Jack,' he cried, 'give us old Fiery-Eyes.'

"The Nightingale hesitated. Fiery-Eyes was a rollicking drinking song; but Andy put the glass to his lips and his scruples vanished in the tempting aroma. He began at the top of his voice, partners were chosen, and, trembling with excitement and impatience, like prisoners unexpectedly set free, the men gathered around, and made their bets.

"'What born fools we've been,' said Black Andy, laying down a card.

"'Yes,' replied the Flying Dutchman, 'porn fools!' And he followed suit.

"But a thin white hand came down on the bits of colored paste-board. It was our Lady. With her hair disordered, and the spots of fever in her cheeks, she stood among us again, but not as of old. Angry eyes confronted her, and Andy wrenched the cards from her grasp. 'No, my Lady,' he said, sternly, 'never again!'"

"The Lady gazed from one face to the next, and so all around the circle; all were dark and sullen. Then she bowed her head upon her hands and wept aloud.

"There was a sudden shrinking away on all sides, the players rose, the cards were dropped. But the Lady glided away, weeping as she went; she entered the church door and the men could see her taking her accustomed place on the platform. One by one they followed; Black Andy lingered till the last, but he came. The service began, and went on falteringly, without spirit, with palpable fears of a total breaking down which never quite came; the Nightingale sang almost alone, and made sad work with the words; Salem joined in confidently, but did not improve the sense of the hymn. The Lady was silent. But when the time for the sermon came she rose and her voice burst forth.

"'Men, brothers, what have I done? A change has come over the town, a change has come over your hearts. You shun me! What have I done?'"

"There was a grim silence; then the Doctor rose in his place and answered—

"Only this, madam. You have shown yourself to be a woman."

"And what did you think me?"

"A saint."

"God forbid!" said the Lady, earnestly. "I never thought myself one."

"I know that well. But you were a saint to us; hence your influence. It is gone."

"Is it all gone?" asked the Lady, sadly.

"Yes. Do not deceive yourself; we have never been one whit better save through our love for you. We held you as something high above ourselves; we were content to worship you."

"O no, not me!" said the Lady, shuddering.

"Yes, you, you alone! But—our idol came down among us and showed herself to be but common flesh and blood. What wonder that we stand aghast? What wonder that our hearts are bitter? What wonder (worse than all!) that when the awe has quite vanished, there is strife for the beautiful image fallen from its niche?"

"The Doctor ceased, and turned away. The Lady stretched out her hands toward the others; her face was deadly pale, and there was a bewildered expression in her eyes.

"O, ye for whom I have prayed, for whom I have struggled to obtain a blessing—ye whom I have loved so—do ye desert me thus?" she cried.

"You have deserted us," answered a voice.

"I have not."

"You have," cried Black Andy, pushing to the front. "You love that Mitchell! Deny it if you dare!"

"There was an irrepressible murmur, then a sudden hush. The angry suspicion, the numbing certainty had found voice at last; the secret was out. All eyes, which had at first closed with the shock, were now fixed upon the solitary woman before them; they burned like coals.

"Do I?" murmured the Lady, with a strange questioning look that turned from face to face—"do I?—Great God! I do." She sank upon her knees and buried her face in her trembling hands. "The truth has come to me at last—I do!"

"Her voice was a mere whisper, but every ear heard it, and every eye saw the crimson rise to the forehead and redden the white throat.

"For a moment there was silence, broken only by the hard breathing of the men. Then the Doctor spoke.

"Go out and bring him in," he cried. "Bring in this Mitchell! It seems he has other things to do—the blockhead!"

"Two of the men hurried out.

“‘He shall not have her,’ shouted Black Andy. ‘My knife shall see to that!’ And he pressed close to the platform. A great tumult arose, men talked angrily and clinched their fists, voices rose and fell together. ‘He shall not have her—Mitchell! Mitchell!’

“‘The truth is, each one of you wants her himself,’ said the Doctor.

“There was a sudden silence, but every man eyed his neighbor jealously. Black Andy stood in front, knife in hand, and kept guard. The Lady had not moved; she was kneeling, with her face buried in her hands.

“‘I wish to speak to her,’ said the Doctor, advancing.

“‘You shall not,’ cried Andy, fiercely interposing.

“‘You fool! I love her this moment ten thousand times more than you do. But do you suppose I would so much as touch a woman who loved another man?’

“The knife dropped; the Doctor passed on and took his place on the platform by the Lady’s side. The tumult began again, for Mitchell was seen coming in the door between his two keepers.

“‘Mitchell! Mitchell!’ rang angrily through the church.

“‘Look, woman!’ said the Doctor, bending over the kneeling figure at his side. She raised her head and saw the wolfish faces below.

“‘They have had ten months of your religion,’ he said.

“‘It was his revenge. Bitter, indeed; but he loved her.

“In the meantime the man Mitchell was hauled and pushed and tossed forward to the platform by rough hands that longed to throttle him on the way. At last, angry himself, but full of wonder, he confronted them, this crowd of comrades suddenly turned madmen! ‘What does this mean?’ he asked.

“‘Mean! mean!’ shouted the men; ‘a likely story! He asks what this means!’ And they laughed boisterously.

“The Doctor advanced. ‘You see this woman,’ he said.

“‘I see our Lady.’

“‘Our Lady no longer; only a woman like any other—weak and fickle. Take her—but begone.’

“‘Take her!’ repeated Mitchell, bewildered—‘take our Lady! And where?’

“‘Fool! Liar! Blockhead!’ shouted the crowd below.

“‘The truth is simply this, Mitchell,’ continued the Doctor, quietly. ‘We herewith give you up our Lady—ours no longer; for she has just confessed, openly confessed, that she loves you.’

“Mitchell started back. ‘Loves me!’

“‘Yes.’

"Black Andy felt the blade of his knife. 'He'll never have her alive,' he muttered.

"'But,' said Mitchell, bluntly confronting the Doctor, 'I don't want her.'

"'You don't want her?'

"'I don't love her.'

"'You don't love her?'

"'Not in the least,' he replied, growing angry, perhaps at himself. 'What is she to me? Nothing. A very good missionary, no doubt; but *I* don't fancy woman preachers. You may remember that *I* never gave in to her influence; *I* was never under her thumb. *I* was the only man in Little Fishing who cared nothing for her!'

"And that is the secret of *her* liking,' murmured the Doctor. 'O woman! woman! the same the world over!'

"In the meantime the crowd had stood stupefied.

"'He does not love her!' they said to each other; 'he does not want her!'

"Andy's black eyes gleamed with joy; he swung himself up on to the platform. Mitchell stood there with face dark and disturbed, but he did not flinch. Whatever his faults, he was no hypocrite. 'I must leave this tonight,' he said to himself, and turned to go. But quick as a flash our Lady sprang from her knees and threw herself at his feet. 'You are going,' she cried. 'I heard what you said—you do not love me! But take me with you—oh, take me with you! Let me be your servant—your slave—anything—anything, so that I am not parted from you, my lord and master, my only, only love!'

"She clasped his ankles with her thin, white hands, and laid her face on his dusty shoes.

"The whole audience stood dumb before this manifestation of a great love. Enraged, bitter, jealous as was each heart, there was not a man but would at that moment have sacrificed his own love that she might be blessed. Even Mitchell, in one of those rare spirit flashes when the soul is shown bare in the lightning, asked himself, 'Can I not love her?' But the soul answered, 'No.' He stooped, unclasped the clinging hands, and turned resolutely away.

"'You are a fool,' said the Doctor. 'No other woman will ever love you as she does.'

"'I know it,' replied Mitchell.

"He stepped down from the platform and crossed the church, the silent crowd making a way for him as he passed along; he went out into the sunshine, through the village, down toward the beach—they saw him no more.

"The Lady had fainted. The men bore her back to the lodge and tended her with gentle care one week—two weeks—three weeks. Then she died.

"They were all around her; she smiled upon them all, and called them all by name, bidding them farewell. 'Forgive me,' she whispered to the Doctor. The Nightingale sang a hymn, sang as he had never sung before. Black Andy knelt at her feet. For some minutes she lay scarcely breathing; then suddenly she opened her fading eyes. 'Friends,' she murmured, 'I am well punished. I thought myself holy—I held myself above my kind—but God has shown me I am the weakest of them all.'

"The next moment she was gone.

"The men buried her with tender hands. Then, in a kind of blind fury against Fate, they tore down her empty lodge and destroyed its every fragment; in their grim determination they even smoothed over the ground and planted shrubs and bushes, so that the very location might be lost. But they did not stay to see the change. In a month the camp broke up of itself, the town was abandoned, and the island deserted for good and all; I doubt whether any of the men ever came back or even stopped when passing by. Probably I am the only one. Thirty years ago—thirty years ago!"

"That Mitchell was a great fool," I said, after a long pause. "The Doctor was worth twenty of him; for that matter, so was Black Andy. I only hope the fellow was well punished for his stupidity."

"He was."

"O, you kept track of him, did you?"

"Yes. He went back into the world, and the woman he loved repulsed him a second time, and with even more scorn than before."

"Served him right."

"Perhaps so; but after all, what could he do? Love is not made to order. He loved one, not the other; that was his crime. Yet—so strange a creature is man—he came back after thirty years, just to see our Lady's grave."

"What! Are you—"

"I am Mitchell—Reuben Mitchell."

The Flight of Betsey Lane



SARAH ORNE JEWETT



ONE WINDY MORNING in May, three old women sat together near an open window in the shed chamber of Byfleet Poorhouse. The wind was from the northwest, but their window faced the southeast, and they were only visited by an occasional pleasant waft of fresh air.

They were close together, knee to knee, picking over a bushel of beans, and commanding a view of the dandelion-starred, green yard below, and of the winding, sandy road that led to the village, two miles away. Some captive bees were scolding among the cobwebs of the rafters overhead, or thumping against the upper panes of glass; two calves were bawling from the barnyard, where some of the men were at work loading a dump cart and shouting as if everyone were deaf. There was a cheerful feeling of activity, and even an air of comfort, about the Byfleet Poorhouse. Almost everyone was possessed of a most interesting past, though there was less to be said about the future. The inmates were by no means distressed or unhappy; many of them retired to this shelter only for the winter season, and would go out presently, some to begin such work as they could still do, others to live in their own small houses; old age had impoverished most of them by limiting their power of endurance; but far from lamenting the fact that they were town charges, they rather liked the change and excitement of a winter residence on the poor farm. There was a sharp-faced, hard-

worked young widow with seven children, who was an exception to the general level of society, because she deplored the change in her fortunes. The older women regarded her with suspicion, and were apt to talk about her in moments like this, when they happened to sit together at their work.

The three bean-pickers were dressed alike in stout brown gingham, checked by a white line, and all wore great faded aprons of blue drilling, with sufficient pockets convenient to the right hand. Miss Peggy Bond was a very small, belligerent-looking person, who wore a huge pair of steel-bowed spectacles, holding her sharp chin well up in air, as if to supplement an inadequate nose. She was more than half blind, but the spectacles seemed to face upward instead of square ahead, as if their wearer were always on the sharp lookout for birds. Miss Bond had suffered much personal damage from time to time, because she never took heed where she planted her feet, and so was always tripping and stubbing her bruised way through the world. She had fallen down hatchways and cellarways, and stepped composedly into deep ditches and pasture brooks; but she was proud of stating that she was upighted, and so was her father before her. At the poorhouse, where an unusual malady was considered a distinction, upightedness was looked upon as a most honorable infirmity. Plain rheumatism, such as afflicted Aunt Lavina Dow, whose twisted hands found even this light work difficult and tiresome—plain rheumatism was something of everyday occurrence, and nobody cared to hear about it. Poor Peggy was a meek and friendly soul, who never put herself forward; she was just like other folks, as she always loved to say, but Mrs. Lavina Dow was a different sort of person altogether, of great dignity and, occasionally, almost aggressive behavior. The time had been when she could do a good day's work with anybody: but for many years now she had not left the town farm, being too badly crippled to work; she had no relations or friends to visit, but from an innate love of authority she could not submit to being one of those who are forgotten by the world. Mrs. Dow was the hostess and social lawgiver here, where she remembered every inmate and every item of interest for nearly forty years, besides an immense amount of town history and biography for three or four generations back.

She was the dear friend of the third woman, Betsey Lane; together they led thought and opinion—chiefly opinion—and held sway, not only over Byfleet Poor farm, but also the selectmen and all others in authority. Betsey Lane had spent most of her life as aid-in-general to the respected household of old General Thornton. She had been much trusted and valued, and, at the breaking up of that once large and

flourishing family, she had been left in good circumstances, what with legacies and her own comfortable savings; but by sad misfortune and lavish generosity everything had been scattered, and after much illness, which ended in a stiffened arm and more uncertainty, the good soul had sensibly decided that it was easier for the whole town to support her than for a part of it. She had always hoped to see something of the world before she died; she came of an adventurous, seafaring stock, but had never made a longer journey than to the towns of Danby and Northville, thirty miles away.

They were all old women; but Betsey Lane, who was sixty-nine, and looked much older, was the youngest. Peggy Bond was far on in the seventies, and Mrs. Dow was at least ten years older. She made a great secret of her years; and as she sometimes spoke of events prior to the Revolution with the assertion of having been an eyewitness, she naturally wore an air of vast antiquity. Her tales were an inexpressible delight to Betsey Lane, who felt younger by twenty years because her friend and comrade was so unconscious of chronological limitations.

The bushel basket of cranberry beans was within easy reach, and each of the pickers had filled her lap from it again and again. The shed chamber was not an unpleasant place in which to sit at work, with its traces of seed corn hanging from the brown cross beams, its spare churns, and dusty loom, and rickety wool-wheels, and a few bits of old furniture. In one far corner was a wide board of dismal use and suggestion, and close beside it an old cradle. There was a battered chest of drawers where the keeper of the poorhouse kept his garden seeds, with the withered remains of three seed cucumbers ornamenting the top. Nothing beautiful could be discovered, nothing interesting, but there was something usable and homely about the place. It was the favorite and untroubled bower of the bean-pickers, to which they might retreat unmolested from the public apartments of this rustic institution.

Betsey Lane blew away the chaff from her handful of beans. The spring breeze blew the chaff back again, and sifted it over her face and shoulders. She rubbed it out of her eyes impatiently, and happened to notice old Peggy holding her own handful high, as if it were an oblation, and turning her queer, up-tilted head this way and that, to look at the beans sharply, as if she were first cousin to a hen.

"There, Miss Bond, 't is kind of botherin' work for you, ain't it?" Betsey inquired compassionately.

"I feel to enjoy it, anything that I can do my own way so," responded Peggy. "I like to do my part. Ain't that old Mis' Fales comin' up the road? It sounds like her step."

The others looked, but they were not farsighted, and for a moment Peggy had the advantage. Mrs. Fales was not a favorite.

"I hope she ain't comin' here to put up this spring. I guess she won't now, it's gettin' so late," said Betsey Lane. "She likes to go rovin' soon as the roads is settled."

"'T is Mis' Fales!" said Peggy Bond, listening with solemn anxiety. "There, do let's pray her by!"

"I guess she's headin' for her cousin's folks up Beech Hill way," said Betsey presently. "If she'd left her daughter's this mornin', she'd have got just about as far as this. I kind o' wish she had stepped in just to pass the time o' day, long's she wa'n't going to make no stop."

There was a silence as to further speech in the shed chamber; and even the calves were quiet in the barnyard. The men had all gone away to the field where corn-planting was going on. The beans clicked steadily into the wooden measure at the pickers' feet. Betsey Lane began to sing a hymn, and the others joined in as best they might, like autumnal crickets; their voices were sharp and cracked, with now and then a few low notes of plaintive tone. Betsey herself could sing pretty well, but the others could only make a kind of accompaniment. Their voices ceased altogether at the higher notes.

"Oh my! I wish I had the means to go to the Centennial," mourned Betsey Lane, stopping so suddenly that the others had to go on croaking and shrilling without her for a moment before they could stop. "It seems to me as if I can't die happy 'less I do," she added; "I ain't never seen nothin' of the world, an' here I be."

"What if you was as old as I be?" suggested Mrs. Dow pompously. "You've got time enough yet, Betsey; don't you go an' despair. I knowed of a woman that went clean round the world four times when she was past eighty, an' enjoyed herself real well. Her folks followed the sea; she had three sons an' a daughter married—all shipmasters, and she'd been with her own husband when they was young. She was left a widder early, and fetched up her family herself—a real stirrin', smart woman. After they'd got married off, an' settled, an' was doing well, she come to be lonesome; and first she tried to stick it out alone, but she wa'n't one that could; an' she got a notion she hadn't nothin' before her but her last sickness, and she wa'n't a person that enjoyed havin' other folks do for her. So one on her boys—I guess 't was the oldest—said he was going to take her to sea; there was ample room, an' he was sailin' a good time o' year for the Cape o' Good Hope an' way up to some o' them tea-ports in the Chiny Seas. She was all high to go, but it made a sight o' talk at her age; an' the minister made it a subject o' prayer the last Sunday, and all the folks took a last leave; but she said to some she'd fetch 'em home

something real pritty, and so did. An' then they come home t' other way, round the Horn, an' she done so well, an' was such a sight o' company, the other child'n was jealous, an' she promised she'd go a v'y'ge long o' each on 'em. She was as sprightly a person as ever I see; an' could speak well o' what she'd seen."

"Did she die to sea?" asked Peggy, with interest.

"No, she died to home between v'y'ges, or she'd gone to sea again. I was to her funeral. She liked her son George's ship the best; 't was the one she was going on to Callao. They said the men aboard all called her 'gran'ma'am,' an' she kep' 'em mended up, an' would go below and tend to 'em if they was sick. She might 'a' been alive an' enjoyin of herself a good many years but for the kick of a cow; 't was a new cow out of a drove, a dreadful unruly beast."

Mrs. Dow stopped for breath, and reached down for a new supply of beans; her empty apron was gray with soft chaff. Betsey Lane, still pondering on the Centennial, began to sing another verse of her hymn, and again the old women joined her. At this moment some strangers came driving round into the yard from the front of the house. The turf was soft, and our friends did not hear the horses' steps. Their voices cracked and quavered; it was a funny little concert, and a lady in an open carriage just below listened with sympathy and amusement.

II

"Betsey! Betsey! Miss Lane!" a voice called eagerly at the foot of the stairs that led up from the shed. "Betsey! There's a lady here wants to see you right away."

Betsey was dazed with excitement, like a country child who knows the rare pleasure of being called out of school. "Lor', I ain't fit to go down, be I?" she faltered, looking anxiously at her friends; but Peggy was gazing even nearer to the zenith than usual, in her excited effort to see down into the yard, and Mrs. Dow only nodded somewhat jealously, and said that she guessed 't was nobody would do her any harm. She rose ponderously, while Betsey hesitated, being, as they would have said, all of a twitter. "It is a lady, certain," Mrs. Dow assured her; "'t ain't often there's a lady comes here."

"While there was any of Mis' Gen'ral Thornton's folks left, I wa'n't without visits from the gentry," said Betsey Lane, turning back proudly at the head of the stairs, with a touch of old-world pride and sense of high station. Then she disappeared, and closed the door behind her at the stairfoot with a decision quite unwelcome to the friends above.

"She needn't 'a' been so dreadful 'fraid anybody was goin' to listen. I guess we've got folks to ride an' see us, or had once, if we hain't now," said Miss Peggy Bond, plaintively.

"I expect 't was only the wind shoved it to," said Aunt Lavina. "Betsey is one that gits flustered easier than some. I wish 't was somebody to take her off an' give her a kind of a good time; she's young to settle down 'long of old folks like us. Betsey's got a notion o' rovin' such as ain't my natur', but I should like to see her satisfied. She'd been a very understandin' person, if she had the advantages that some does."

"'T is so," said Peggy Bond, tilting her chin high. "I suppose you can't hear nothin' they're saying? I feel my hearin' ain't up to whar it was. I can hear things close to me well as ever; but there, hearin' ain't everything; 't ain't as if we lived where there was more goin' on to hear. Seems to me them folks is stoppin' a good while."

"They surely be," agreed Lavina Dow.

"I expect it's somethin' particular. There ain't none of the Thornton folks left, except one o' the gran'darters, an' I've often heard Betsey remark that she should never see her more, for she lives to London. Strange how folks feels contented in them strayaway places off to the ends of the airth."

The flies and bees were buzzing against the hot windowpanes; the handfuls of beans were clicking into the brown wooden measure. A bird came and perched on the windowsill, and then flitted away toward the blue sky. Below, in the yard, Betsey Lane stood talking with the lady. She had put her blue drilling apron over her head, and her face was shining with delight.

"Lor', dear," she said, for at least the third time, "I remember ye when I first see ye; an awful pritty baby you was, an' they all said you looked just like the old gen'ral. Be you goin' back to foreign parts right away?"

"Yes, I'm going back; you know that all my children are there. I wish I could take you with me for a visit," said the charming young guest. "I'm going to carry over some of the pictures and furniture from the old house; I didn't care half so much for them when I was younger as I do now. Perhaps next summer we shall all come over for a while. I should like to see my girls and boys playing under the pines."

"I wish you re'lly was livin' to the old place," said Betsey Lane. Her imagination was not swift; she needed time to think over all that was being told her, and she could not fancy the two strange houses across the sea. The old Thornton house was to her mind the most delightful and elegant in the world.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" asked Mrs. Strafford kindly, "anything that I can do for you myself, before I go away? I shall be writing to you, and sending some pictures of the children, and you must let me know how you are getting on."

"Yes, there is one thing, darlin'. If you could stop in the village an' pick me out a pritty, little, small lookin'-glass, that I can keep for me own an' have to remember you by. 'T ain't that I want to set me above the rest o' the folks, but I was always used to havin' my own when I was to your grandma's. There's very nice folks here, some on 'em, and I'm better off than if I was able to keep house; but sence you ask me, that's the only thing I feel cropin' about. What be you goin' right back for? ain't you goin' to see the great fair for Pheladelphia, that everybody talks about?"

"No," said Mrs. Strafford, laughing at this eager and almost convicting question. "No; I'm going back next week. If I were, I believe that I should take you with me. Good-bye, dear old Betsey; you make me feel as if I were a little girl again; you look just the same."

For full five minutes the old woman stood out in the sunshine, dazed with delight, and majestic with a sense of her own consequence. She held something tight in her hand, without thinking what it might be; but just as the friendly mistress of the poor farm came out to hear the news, she tucked the roll of money into the bosom of her brown gingham dress. "'T was my dear Mis' Katy Strafford," she turned to say proudly. "She come way over from London; she's been sick; they thought the voyage would do her good. She said most the first thing she had on her mind was to come an' find me, and see how I was, an' if I was comfortable; an' now she's goin' right back. She's got two splendid houses; an' said how she wished I was there to look after things—she remembered I was always her gran'ma's right hand. Oh, it does so carry me back, to see her! Seems if all the rest on 'em must be there together to the old house. There, I must go right up an' tell Mis' Dow an' Peggy."

"Dinner's all ready; I was just goin' to blow the horn for the men-folks," said the keeper's wife. "They'll be right down. I expect you've got along smart with them beans—all three of you together;" but Betsey's mind roved so high and so far at that moment that no achievements of bean-picking could lure it back.

III

The long table in the great kitchen soon gathered its company of waifs and strays—creatures of improvidence and misfortune, and the irreparable victims of old age. The dinner was satisfactory; and there was

not much delay for conversation. Peggy Bond and Mrs. Dow and Betsey Lane always sat together at one end, with an air of putting the rest of the company below the salt. Betsey was still flushed with excitement; in fact, she could not eat as much as usual, and she looked up from time to time expectantly, as if she were likely to be asked to speak of her guest; but everybody was hungry, and even Mrs. Dow broke in upon some attempted confidences by asking inopportunely for a second potato. There were nearly twenty at the table, counting the keeper and his wife and two children, noisy little persons who had come from school with the small flock belonging to the poor widow, who sat just opposite our friends. She finished her dinner before anyone else, and pushed her chair back; she always helped with the housework—a thin, sorry, bad-tempered-looking poor soul, whom grief had sharpened instead of softening. “I expect you feel too fine to set with common folks,” she said enviously to Betsey.

“Here I be a-settin’,” responded Betsey calmly. “I don’t know ’s I behave more unbecomin’ than usual.” Betsey prided herself upon her good and proper manners; but the rest of the company, who would have liked to hear the bit of morning news, were now defrauded of that pleasure. The wrong note had been struck; there was a silence after the clatter of knives and plates, and one by one the cheerful town charges disappeared. The bean-picking had been finished, and there was a call for any of the women who felt like planting corn; so Peggy Bond, who could follow the line of hills pretty fairly, and Betsey herself, who was still equal to anybody at that work, and Mrs. Dow, all went out to the field together. Aunt Lavina labored slowly up the yard, carrying a light splint-bottomed kitchen chair and her knitting work, and sat near the stone wall on a gentle rise, where she could see the pond and the green country, and exchange a word with her friends as they came and went up and down the rows. Betsey vouchsafed a word now and then about Mrs. Strafford, but you would have thought that she had been suddenly elevated to Mrs. Strafford’s own cares and the responsibilities attending them, and had little in common with her old associates. Mrs. Dow and Peggy knew well that these high-feeling times never lasted long, and so they waited with as much patience as they could muster. They were by no means without that true tact which is only another word for unselfish sympathy.

The strip of corn land ran along the side of a great field; at the upper end of it was a field-corner thicket of young maples and walnut saplings, the children of a great nut tree that marked the boundary. Once, when Betsey Lane found herself alone near this shelter at the end of her row, the other planters having lagged behind beyond the rising

ground, she looked stealthily about, and then put her hand inside her gown, and for the first time took out the money that Mrs. Strafford had given her. She turned it over and over with an astonished look: there were new bank bills for a hundred dollars. Betsey gave a funny little shrug of her shoulders, came out of the bushes, and took a step or two on the narrow edge of turf, as if she were going to dance; then she hastily tucked away her treasure, and stepped discreetly down into the soft harrowed and hoed land, and began to drop corn again, five kernels to a hill. She had seen the top of Peggy Bond's head over the knoll, and now Peggy herself came entirely into view, gazing upward to the skies, and stumbling more or less, but counting the corn by touch and twisting her head about anxiously to gain advantage over her uncertain vision. Betsey made a friendly, inarticulate little sound as they passed; she was thinking that somebody said once that Peggy's eyesight might be remedied if she could go to Boston to the hospital; but that was so remote and impossible an undertaking that no one had ever taken the first step. Betsey Lane's brown old face suddenly worked with excitement, but in a moment more she regained her usual firm expression, and spoke carelessly to Peggy as she turned and came alongside.

The high spring wind of the morning had quite fallen; it was a lovely May afternoon. The woods about the field to the northward were full of birds, and the young leaves scarcely hid the solemn shapes of a company of crows that patiently attended the corn-planting. Two of the men had finished their hoeing, and were busy with the construction of a scarecrow; they knelt in the furrows, chuckling, and looking over some forlorn, discarded garments. It was a time-honored custom to make the scarecrow resemble one of the poorhouse family; and this year they intended to have Mrs. Lavina Dow protect the field in effigy; last year it was the counterfeit of Betsey Lane who stood on guard, with an easily recognized quilted hood and the remains of a valued shawl that one of the calves had found airing on a fence and chewed to pieces. Behind the men was the foundation for this rustic attempt at statuary—an upright stake and bar in the form of a cross. This stood on the highest part of the field; and as the men knelt near it, and the quaint figures of the corn-planters went and came, the scene gave a curious suggestion of foreign life. It was not like New England; the presence of the rude cross appealed strangely to the imagination.

IV

Life flowed so smoothly, for the most part, at the Byfleet Poor farm, that nobody knew what to make, later in the summer, of a strange disappearance. All the elder inmates were familiar with illness and death, and the poor pomp of a town pauper's funeral. The comings and goings and the various misfortunes of those who composed this strange family, related only through its disasters, hardly served for the excitement and talk of a single day. Now that the June days were at their longest, the old people were sure to wake earlier than ever; but one morning, to the astonishment of every one, Betsey Lane's bed was empty; the sheets and blankets, which were her own, and guarded with jealous care, were carefully folded and placed on a chair not too near the window, and Betsey had flown. Nobody had heard her go down the creaking stairs. The kitchen door was unlocked, and the old watchdog lay on the step outside in the early sunshine, wagging his tail and looking wise, as if he were left on guard and meant to keep the fugitive's secret.

"Never knowed her to do nothin' afore 'thout talking it over a fortnight, and paradin' off when we could all see her," ventured a spiteful voice. "Guess we can wait till night to hear 'bout it."

Mrs. Dow looked sorrowful and shook her head. "Betsey had an aunt on her mother's side that went and drownded of herself; she was a pritty-appearing woman as ever you see."

"Perhaps she's gone to spend the day with Decker's folks," suggested Peggy Bond. "She always takes an extra early start; she was speakin' lately o' going up their way;" but Mrs. Dow shook her head with a most melancholy look. "I'm impressed that something's befell her," she insisted. "I heard her a-groanin' in her sleep. I was wakeful the forepart o' the night—'t is very unusual with me, too."

"'T wa'n't like Betsey not to leave us any word," said the other old friend, with more resentment than melancholy. They sat together almost in silence that morning in the shed chamber. Mrs. Dow was sorting and cutting rags, and Peggy braided them into long ropes, to be made into mats at a later date. If they had only known where Betsey Lane had gone, they might have talked about it until dinnertime at noon; but failing this new subject, they could take no interest in any of their old ones. Out in the field the corn was well up, and the men were hoeing. It was a hot morning in the shed chamber, and the woolen rags were dusty and hot to handle.

V

Byfleet people knew each other well, and when this mysteriously absent person did not return to the town farm at the end of a week, public interest became much excited; and presently it was ascertained that Betsey Lane was neither making a visit to her friends the Deckers on Birch Hill, nor to any nearer acquaintances; in fact, she had disappeared altogether from her wonted haunts. Nobody remembered to have seen her pass, hers had been such an early flitting; and when somebody thought of her having gone away by train, he was laughed at for forgetting that the earliest morning train from South Byfleet, the nearest station, did not start until long after eight o'clock; and if Betsey had designed to be one of the passengers, she would have started along the road at seven, and been seen and known of all women. There was not a kitchen in that part of Byfleet that did not have windows toward the road. Conversation rarely left the level of the neighborhood gossip: to see Betsey Lane, in her best clothes, at that hour in the morning, would have been the signal of much exercise of imagination; but as day after day went by without news, the curiosity of those who knew her best turned slowly into fear, and at last Peggy Bond again gave utterance to the belief that Betsey had either gone out in the early morning and put an end to her life, or that she had gone to the Centennial. Some of the people at table were moved to loud laughter—it was at supper-time on a Sunday night—but others listened with great interest.

"She never'd put on her good clothes to drownd herself," said the widow. "She might have thought 't was good as takin' 'em with her, though. Old folks has wandered off an' got lost in the woods afore now."

Mrs. Dow and Peggy resented this impertinent remark, but deigned to take no notice of the speaker. "She wouldn't have wore her best clothes to the Centennial, would she?" mildly inquired Peggy, bobbing her head toward the ceiling. "'T would be a shame to spoil your best things in such a place. An' I don't know of her havin' any money; there's the end o' that."

"You're bad as old Mis' Bland, that used to live neighbor to our folks," said one of the old men. "She was dreadful precise; an' she so begretched to wear a good alapaca dress that was left to her, that it hung in a press forty year, an' baited the moths at last."

"I often seen Mis' Bland a-goin' in to meetin' when I was a young girl," said Peggy Bond approvingly. "She was a good-appearin' woman, an' she left property."

"Wish she'd left it to me, then," said the poor soul opposite, glancing at her pathetic row of children: but it was not good manners at the

farm to deplore one's situation, and Mrs. Dow and Peggy only frowned. "Where do you suppose Betsey can be?" said Mrs. Dow, for the twentieth time. "She didn't have no money. I know she ain't gone far, if it's so that she's yet alive. She's b'en real pinched all the spring."

"Perhaps that lady that come one day give her some," the keeper's wife suggested mildly.

"Then Betsey would have told me," said Mrs. Dow, with injured dignity.

VI

On the morning of her disappearance, Betsey rose even before the pewee and the English sparrow, and dressed herself quietly, though with trembling hands, and stole out of the kitchen door like a plunderless thief. The old dog licked her hand and looked at her anxiously; the tortoiseshell cat rubbed against her best gown, and trotted away up the yard, then she turned anxiously and came after the old woman, following faithfully until she had to be driven back. Betsey was used to long country excursions afoot. She dearly loved the early morning; and finding that there was no dew to trouble her, she began to follow pasture paths and short cuts across the fields, surprising here and there a flock of sleepy sheep, or a startled calf that rustled out from the bushes. The birds were pecking their breakfast from bush and turf; and hardly any of the wild inhabitants of that rural world were enough alarmed by her presence to do more than flutter away if they chanced to be in her path. She stepped along, light-footed and eager as a girl, dressed in her neat old straw bonnet and black gown, and carrying a few belongings in her best bundle-handkerchief, one that her only brother had brought home from the East Indies fifty years before. There was an old crow perched as sentinel on a small, dead pine tree, where he could warn friends who were pulling up the sprouted corn in a field close by; but he only gave a contemptuous caw as the adventurer appeared, and she shook her bundle at him in revenge, and laughed to see him so clumsy as he tried to keep his footing on the twigs.

"Yes, I be," she assured him. "I'm a-goin' to Pheladelphia, to the Centennial, same's other folks. I'd jest as soon tell ye's not, old crow;" and Betsey laughed aloud in pleased content with herself and her darling, as she walked along. She had only two miles to go to the station at South Byfleet, and she felt for the money now and then, and found it safe enough. She took great pride in the success of her escape, and especially in the long concealment of her wealth. Not a night had passed

since Mrs. Strafford's visit that she had not slept with the roll of money under her pillow by night, and buttoned safe inside her dress by day. She knew that everybody would offer advice and even commands about the spending or saving of it; and she brooked no interference.

The last mile of the footpath to South Byfleet was along the railway track; and Betsey began to feel in haste, though it was still nearly two hours to train time. She looked anxiously forward and back along the rails every few minutes, for fear of being run over; and at last she caught sight of an engine that was apparently coming toward her, and took flight into the woods before she could gather courage to follow the path again. The freight train proved to be at a standstill, waiting at a turnout; and some of the men were straying about, eating their early breakfast comfortably in this time of leisure. As the old woman came up to them, she stopped too, for a moment of rest and conversation.

"Where be ye goin'?" she asked pleasantly; and they told her. It was to the town where she had to change cars and take the great through train; a point of geography which she had learned from evening talks between the men at the farm.

"What'll ye carry me there for?"

"We don't run no passenger cars," said one of the young fellows, laughing. "What makes you in such a hurry?"

"I'm startin' for Pheladelphia, an' it's a gre't ways to go."

"So 't is; but you're consid'able early, if you're makin' for the eight-forty train. See here! you haven't got a needle an' thread 'long of you in that bundle, have you? If you'll sew me on a couple o' buttons, I'll give ye a free ride. I'm in a sight o' distress, an' none o' the fellows is provided with as much as a bent pin."

"You poor boy! I'll have you seen to, in half a minute. I'm troubled with a stiff arm, but I'll do the best I can."

The obliging Betsey seated herself stiffly on the slope of the embankment, and found her thread and needle with utmost haste. Two of the trainmen stood by and watched the careful stitches, and even offered her a place as spare brakeman, so that they might keep her near; and Betsey took the offer with considerable seriousness, only thinking it necessary to assure them that she was getting most too old to be out in all weathers. An express went by like an earthquake, and she was presently hoisted on board an empty boxcar by two of her new and flattering acquaintances, and found herself before noon at the end of the first stage of her journey, without having spent a cent, and furnished with any amount of thrifty advice. One of the young men, being compassionate of her unprotected state as a traveler, advised her to find out the widow of an uncle of his in Philadelphia, saying despairingly that

he could n't tell her just how to find the house; but Miss Betsey Lane said that she had an English tongue in her head, and should be sure to find whatever she was looking for. This unexpected incident of the freight train was the reason why everybody about the South Byfleet station insisted that no such person had taken passage by the regular train that same morning, and why there were those who persuaded themselves that Miss Betsey Lane was probably lying at the bottom of the poor farm pond.

VII

"Land sakes!" said Miss Betsey Lane, as she watched a Turkish person parading by in his red fez, "I call the Centennial somethin' like the day o' judgment! I wish I was goin' to stop a month, but I dare say 't would be the death o' my poor old bones."

She was leaning against the barrier of a patent popcorn establishment, which had given her a sudden reminder of home, and of the winter nights when the sharp-kerneled little red and yellow ears were brought out, and Old Uncle Eph Flanders sat by the kitchen stove, and solemnly filled a great wooden chopping-tray for the refreshment of the company. She had wandered and loitered and looked until her eyes and head had grown numb and unreceptive; but it is only unimaginative persons who can be really astonished. The imagination can always outrun the possible and actual sights and sounds of the world; and this plain old body from Byfleet rarely found anything rich and splendid enough to surprise her. She saw the wonders of the West and the splendors of the East with equal calmness and satisfaction; she had always known that there was an amazing world outside the boundaries of Byfleet. There was a piece of paper in her pocket on which was marked, in her clumsy handwriting, "If Betsey Lane should meet with accident, notify the selectmen of Byfleet;" but having made this slight provision for the future, she had thrown herself boldly into the sea of strangers, and then had made the joyful discovery that friends were to be found at every turn.

There was something delightfully companionable about Betsey; she had a way of suddenly looking up over her big spectacles with a reassuring and expectant smile, as if you were going to speak to her, and you generally did. She must have found out where hundreds of people came from, and whom they had left at home, and what they thought of the great show, as she sat on a bench to rest, or leaned over the railings where free luncheons were afforded by the makers of hot waffles and

molasses candy and fried potatoes; and there was not a night when she did not return to her lodgings with a pocket crammed with samples of spool cotton and nobody knows what. She had already collected small presents for almost everybody she knew at home, and she was such a pleasant, beaming old country body, so unmistakably appreciative and interested, that nobody ever thought of wishing that she would move on. Nearly all the busy people of the Exhibition called her either Auntie or Grandma at once, and made little pleasures for her as best they could. She was a delightful contrast to the indifferent, stupid crowd that drifted along, with eyes fixed at the same level, and seeing, even on that level, nothing for fifty feet at a time. "What be you making here, dear?" Betsey Lane would ask joyfully, and the most perfunctory guardian hastened to explain. She squandered money as she had never had the pleasure of doing before, and this hastened the day when she must return to Byfleet. She was always inquiring if there were any spectacle-sellers at hand, and received occasional directions; but it was a difficult place for her to find her way about in, and the very last day of her stay arrived before she found an exhibitor of the desired sort, and oculist and instrument-maker.

"I called to get some specs for a friend that's upighted," she gravely informed the salesman, to his extreme amusement. "She's dreadful troubled, and jerks her head up like a hen a-drinkin'. She's got a blur a-growin' an' spreadin', an' sometimes she can see out to one side on 't, and more times she can't."

"Cataracts," said a middle-aged gentleman at her side; and Betsey Lane turned to regard him with approval and curiosity.

"'T is Miss Peggy Bond I was mentioning, of Byfleet Poor farm," she explained. "I count on gettin' some glasses to relieve her trouble, if there's any to be found."

"Glasses won't do her any good," said the stranger. "Suppose you come and sit down on this bench, and tell me all about it. First, where is Byfleet?" and Betsey gave the directions at length.

"I thought so," said the surgeon. "How old is this friend of yours?"

Betsey cleared her throat decisively, and smoothed her gown over her knees as if it were an apron; then she turned to take a good look at her new acquaintance as they sat on the rustic bench together. "Who be you, sir, I should like to know?" she asked, in a friendly tone.

"My name's Dunster."

"I take it you 're a doctor," continued Betsey, as if they had overtaken each other walking from Byfleet to South Byfleet on a summer morning.

"I'm a doctor; part of one at least," said he. "I know more or less about eyes; and I spend my summers down on the shore at the mouth of your river; some day I'll come up and look at this person. How old is she?"

"Peggy Bond is one that never tells her age; 't ain't come quite up to where she'll begin to brag of it, you see," explained Betsey reluctantly; "but I know her to be nigh to seventy-six, one way or t' other. Her an' Mrs. Mary Ann Chick was same year's child'n, and Peggy knows I know it, an' two or three times when we've be'n in the buryin'-ground where Mary Ann lays an' had her dates right on her headstone, I couldn't bring Peggy to take no sort o' notice. I will say she makes, at times, a convenience of being upighted. But there, I feel for her—everybody does; it keeps her stubbin' an' trippin' against everything, beakin' and gazin' up the way she has to."

"Yes, yes," said the doctor, whose eyes were twinkling. "I'll come and look after her, with your town doctor, this summer—some time in the last of July or first of August."

"You'll find occupation," said Betsey, not without an air of patronage. "Most of us to the Byfleet Farm has got our ails, now I tell ye. You ain't got no bitters that 'll take a dozen years right off an ol' lady's shoulders?"

The busy man smiled pleasantly, and shook his head as he went away. "Dunster," said Betsey to herself, soberly committing the new name to her sound memory. "Yes, I must n't forget to speak of him to the doctor, as he directed. I do' know now as Peggy would vally herself quite so much accordin' to, if she had her eyes fixed same as other folks. I expect there would n't been a smarter woman in town, though, if she'd had a proper chance. Now I've done what I set to do for her, I do believe, an' 't wa'n't glasses, neither. I'll git her a pritty little shawl with that money I laid aside. Peggy Bond ain't got a pritty shawl. I always wanted to have a real good time, an' now I'm havin' it."

VIII

Two or three days later, two pathetic figures might have been seen crossing the slopes of the poor farm field, toward the low shores of Byfield pond. It was early in the morning, and the stubble of the lately mown grass was wet with rain and hindering to old feet. Peggy Bond was more blundering and liable to stray in the wrong direction than usual; it was one of the days when she could hardly see at all. Aunt

Lavina Dow was unusually clumsy of movement, and stiff in the joints; she had not been so far from the house for three years. The morning breeze filled the gathers of her wide gingham skirt, and aggravated the size of her unwieldy figure. She supported herself with a stick, and trusted beside to the fragile support of Peggy's arm. They were talking together in whispers.

"Oh, my sakes!" exclaimed Peggy, moving her small head from side to side. "Hear you wheeze, Mis' Dow! This may be the death o' you; there, do go slow! You set here on the side-hill, an' le' me go try if I can see."

"It needs more eyesight than you 've got," said Mrs. Dow, panting between the words. "Oh! to think how spry I was in my young days, an' here I be now, the full of a door, an' all my complaints so aggravated by my size. 'T is hard! 't is hard! but I'm a-doin' of all this for pore Betsey's sake. I know they've all laughed, but I look to see her ris' to the top o' the pond this day—'t is just nine days since she departed; an' say what they may, I know she hove herself in. It run in her family; Betsey had an aunt that done just so, an' she ain't be'n like herself, a-broodin' an' hivin' away alone, an' nothin' to say to you an' me that was always sich good company all together. Somethin' sprung her mind, now I tell ye, Mis' Bond."

"I feel to hope we sha'n't find her, I must say," faltered Peggy. It was plain that Mrs. Dow was the captain of this doleful expedition. "I guess she ain't never thought o' drownin' of herself, Mis' Dow; she's gone off a-vistin' way over to the other side of South Byfleet; some thinks she's gone to the Centennial even now!"

"She hadn't no proper means, I tell ye," wheezed Mrs. Dow indignantly; "an' if you prefer that others should find her floatin' to the top this day, instid of us that's her best friends, you can step back to the house."

They walked on in aggrieved silence. Peggy Bond trembled with excitement, but her companion's firm grasp never wavered, and so they came to the narrow, gravelly margin and stood still. Peggy tried in vain to see the glittering water and the pond lilies that starred it; she knew that they must be there; once, years ago, she had caught fleeting glimpses of them, and she never forgot what she had once seen. The clear blue sky overhead, the dark pine woods beyond the pond, were all clearly pictured in her mind. "Can't you see nothin'?" she faltered; "I believe I'm wuss 'n upighted this day. I'm going to be blind."

"No," said Lavina Dow solemnly; "no, there ain't nothin' whatever, Peggy. I hope to mercy she ain't"—

"Why, whoever'd expected to find you 'way out here!" exclaimed a brisk and cheerful voice. There stood Betsey Lane herself, close behind them, having just emerged from a thicket of alders that grew close by. She was following the short way homeward from the railroad.

"Why, what's the matter, Mis' Dow? You ain't overdoin', be ye? an' Peggy's all of a flutter. What in the name of natur' ails ye?"

"There ain't nothin' the matter, as I knows on," responded the leader of this fruitless expedition. "We only thought we'd take a stroll this pleasant mornin'," she added, with sublime self-possession. "Where've you be'n, Betsey Lane?"

"To Pheladelphia, ma'am," said Betsey, looking quite young and gay, and wearing a townish and unfamiliar air that upheld her words. "All ought to go that can; why, you feel's if you'd be'n all round the world. I guess I've got enough to think of and tell ye for the rest o' my days. I've always wanted to go somewheres. I wish you'd be'n there, I do so. I've talked with folks from Chiny an' the back o' Pennsylvany: and I see folks way from Australy that 'peared as well as anybody; an' I see how they made spool cotton, an' sights o' other things; an' I spoke with a doctor that lives down to the beach in the summer, an' he offered to come up 'long in the first of August, an' see what he can do for Peggy's eyesight. There was di'monds there as big as pigeon's eggs; an' I met with Mis' Abby Fletcher from South Byfleet depot; an' there was hogs there that weighed risin' thirteen hundred"—

"I want to know," said Mrs. Lavina Dow and Peggy Bond, together.

"Well, 't was a great exper'ence for a person," added Lavina, turning ponderously, in spite of herself, to give a last wistful look at the smiling waters of the pond.

"I don't know how soon I be goin' to settle down," proclaimed the rustic sister of Sindbad. "What's for the good o' one's for the good of all. You just wait till we're setting together up in the old shed chamber! You know, my dear Mis' Katy Strafford give me a han'some present o' money that day she come to see me; and I'd be'n a-dreamin' by night an' day o' seein' that Centennial; and when I come to think on 't I felt sure somebody ought to go from this neighborhood, if't was only for the good o' the rest; and I thought I'd better be the one. I wa'n't goin' to ask the selec'men neither. I've come back with one-thirty-five in money, and I see everything there, an' I fetched ye all a little somethin'; but I'm full o' dust now, an' pretty nigh beat out. I never see a place more friendly than Pheladelphia; but 't ain't natural to a Byfleet person to be

always walkin' on a level. There, now, Peggy, you take my bundle-handkerchief and the basket, and let Mis' Dow sag on to me. I'll git her along twice as easy."

With this the small elderly company set forth triumphant toward the poorhouse, across the wide green field.

An Independent Thinker



MARY WILKINS FREEMAN

ESTHER GAY'S HOUSE was little and square, and mounted on posts like stilts. A stair led up to the door on the left side. Morning glories climbed up the stair railing, the front of the house and the other side were covered with them, all the windows but one were curtained with the matted green vines. Esther sat at the uncurtained window, and knitted. She perked her thin, pale nose up in the air, her pointed chin tilted upward too; she held her knitting high, and the needles clicked loud, and shone in the sun. The bell was ringing for church, and a good many people were passing. They could look in on her, and see very plainly what she was doing. Every time a group went by she pursed her thin old lips tighter, and pointed up her nose higher, and knitted more fiercely. Her skinny shoulders jerked. She cast a sharp glance at everyone who passed, but no one caught her looking. She knew them all. This was a little village. By and by the bell had stopped tolling, and even the late churchgoers had creaked briskly out of sight. The street, which was narrow here, was still and vacant.

Presently a woman appeared in a little flower garden in front of the opposite house. She was picking a nosegay. She was little and spare, and she bent over the flowers with a stiffness as of stiff wires. It seemed as if it would take mechanical force to spring her up again.

Esther watched her. "It's dretful hard work for her to git around," she muttered to herself.

Finally, she laid down her knitting and called across to her. "Laviny!" said she.

The woman came out to the gate with some marigolds and candytuft in her hand. Her dim blue eyes blinked in the light. She looked over and smiled with a sort of helpless inquiry.

"Come over here a minute."

"I—guess I—can't."

Esther was very deaf. She could not hear a word, but she saw the deprecating shake of the head, and she knew well enough.

"I'd like to know why you can't, a minute. You kin hear your mother the minute she speaks."

The woman glanced back at the house, then she looked over at Esther. Her streaked light hair hung in half-curls over her wide crocheted collar; she had a little, narrow, wrinkled face, but her cheeks were as red as roses.

"I guess I'd better not. It's Sunday, you know," said she. Her soft, timid voice could by no possibility reach those deaf ears across the way.

"What?"

"I—guess I'd better not—as long as it's *Sunday*."

Esther's strained attention caught the last word, and guessed at the rest from a knowledge of the speaker.

"Stuff," said she, with a sniff through her delicate, uptilted nostrils. "I'd like to know how much worse 'tis for you to step over here a minute, an' tell me how *she* is when I can't hear across the road, than to stop an' talk comin' out o' meetin'; you'd do that quick enough. You're strainin', Laviny Dodge."

Lavinia, as if overwhelmed by the argument, cast one anxious glance back at the house, and came through the gate.

Just then a feeble, tremulous voice, with a wonderful quality of fine sharpness in it, broke forth behind her,

"Laviny, Laviny, where be you goin'? Come back here."

Lavinia, wheeling with such precipitate vigor that it suggested a creak, went up the path.

"I wa'n't goin' anywhere, mother," she called out. "What's the matter?"

"You can't pull the wool over my eyes. I *seed* you a-goin' out the gate."

Lavinia's mother was over ninety and bedridden. That infinitesimal face which had passed through the stages of beauty, commonplaceness, and hideousness, and now arrived at that of the fine grotesqueness

which has, as well as beauty, a certain charm of its own, peered out from its great feather pillows. The skin on the pinched face was of a dark-yellow color, the eyes were like black points, the tiny, sunken mouth had a sardonic pucker.

"Esther jest wanted me to come over there a minute. She wanted to ask after you," said Lavinia, standing beside the bed, holding her flowers.

"Hey?"

"She *jest* wanted me to come over an' tell her how you was."

"How I was?"

"Yes."

"Did you tell her I was miser'ble?"

"I didn't go, mother."

"I *seed* you a-goin' out the gate."

"I came back. She couldn't hear 'thout I went way over."

"Hey?"

"It's all right, mother," screamed Lavinia. Then she went about putting the flowers in water.

The old woman's little eyes followed her, with a sharp light like steel.

"I ain't goin' to hev you goin' over to Esther Gay's, Sabbath day," she went on, her thin voice rasping out from her pillows like a file. "She ain't no kind of a girl. Wa'n't she knittin'?"

"Yes."

"Hey?"

"Yes, she was knittin', mother."

"Wa'n't knittin'?"

"Y-e-s, she was."

"I knowed it. Stayin' home from meetin' an' knittin'. I ain't goin' to hev you over thar, Lavinia."

Esther Gay, over in her window, held her knitting up higher, and knitted with fury. "H'm, the old lady called her back," said she. "If they want to show out they kin, I'm goin' to do what I think's right."

The morning glories on the house were beautiful this morning, the purple and white and rosy ones stood out with a soft crispness. Esther Gay's house was not so pretty in winter—there was no paint on it, and some crooked outlines showed. It was a poor little structure, but Esther owned it free of encumbrances. She had also a pension of ninety-six dollars which served her for support. She considered herself well to do. There was not enough for anything besides necessities, but Esther was one who had always looked upon necessities as luxuries. Her sharp eyes saw the farthest worth of things. When she bought a half-cord of

pine wood with an allotment of her pension money, she saw in a vision all the warmth and utility which could ever come from it. When it was heaped up in the space under the house which she used for a woodshed, she used to go and look at it.

"Esther Gay does think so much of her own things," people said.

That little house, which, with its precipitous stair and festoons of morning glories, had something of a foreign picturesqueness, looked to her like a real palace. She paid a higher tax upon it than she should have done. A lesser one had been levied, and regarded by her as an insult. "My house is worth more'n that," she had told the assessor with an indignant bridle. She paid the increased tax with cheerful pride, and frequently spoke of it. Today she often glanced from her knitting around the room. There was a certain beauty in it, although it was hardly the one which she recognized. It was full of a lovely, wavering, gold-green light, and there was a fine order and cleanness which gave a sense of peace. But Esther saw mainly her striped rag-carpet, her formally set chairs, her lounge covered with Brussels, and her shining cooking stove.

Still she looked at nothing with the delight with which she surveyed her granddaughter Hatty, when she returned from church.

"Well, you've got home, ain't you?" she said, when the young, slim girl, with her pale, sharp face, which was like her grandmother's, stood before her. Hatty in her meeting gown of light-brown delaine, and her white meeting hat trimmed with light-brown ribbons and blue flowers was not pretty, but the old woman admired her.

"Yes," said Hatty. Then she went into her little bedroom to take off her things. There was a slow shyness about her. She never talked much, even to her grandmother.

"You kin git you somethin' to eat, if you want it," said the old woman. "I don't want to stop myself till I git this heel done. Was Henry to meetin'?"

"Yes."

"His father an' mother?"

"Yes."

Henry was the young man who had been paying attention to Hatty. Her grandmother was proud and pleased; she liked him.

Hatty generally went to church Sunday evenings, and the young man escorted her home, and came in and made a call. Tonight the girl did not go to church as usual. Esther was astonished.

"Why, ain't you goin' to meetin'?" said she.

"No; I guess not."

"Why? why not?"

"I thought I wouldn't."

The old woman looked at her sharply. The tea things were cleared away, and she was at her knitting again, a little lamp at her elbow.

Presently Hatty went out, and sat at the head of the stairs, in the twilight. She sat there by herself until meeting was over, and the people had been straggling by for some time. Then she went downstairs, and joined a young man who passed at the foot of them. She was gone half an hour.

"Where hev you been?" asked her grandmother, when she returned.

"I went out a little way."

"Who with?"

"Henry."

"Why didn't he come in?"

"He thought he wouldn't."

"I don't see why."

Hatty said nothing. She lit her candle to go to bed. Her little thin face was imperturbable.

She worked in a shop, and earned a little money. Her grandmother would not touch a dollar of it; what she did not need to spend for herself, she made her save. Lately the old woman had been considering the advisability of her taking a sum from the saving's bank to buy a silk dress. She thought she might need it soon.

Monday, she opened upon the subject. "Hatty," said she, "I've been thinkin'—don't you believe it would be a good plan for you to take a little of your money out of the bank an' buy you a nice dress?"

Hatty never answered quickly. She looked at her grandmother, then she kept on with her sewing. It was after supper, her shop work was done, and she was sitting at the table with her needle. She seemed to be considering her grandmother's remark.

The old woman waited a moment, then she proceeded: "I've been thinkin'—you ain't never had any real nice dress, you know—that it would be a real good plan for you to take some money, now you've got it, an' buy you a silk one. You ain't never had one, an' you're old enough to."

Still Hatty sewed, and said nothing.

"You might want to go somewhar," continued Esther, "an'—well, of course, if anythin' should happen, if Henry—It's jest as well not to hev' to do everythin' all to once, an' it's consider'ble work to make a silk dress. Why don't you say somethin'?"

"I don't want any silk dress."

"I'd like to know why not?"

Hatty made no reply.

"Look here, Hatty, you an' Henry Little ain't had no trouble, hev' you?"

"I don't know as we have."

"What?"

"I don't know as we have."

"Hatty Gay, I know there's somethin' the matter. Now you jest tell me what 'tis. Ain't he comin' here no more?"

Suddenly the girl curved her arm around on the table, and laid her face down on it. She would not speak another word. She did not seem to be crying, but she sat there, hiding her little plain, uncommunicative face.

"Hatty Gay, ain't he comin'? *Why* ain't he comin'?"

Hatty would give the old woman no information. All she got was that obtained from ensuing events. Henry Little did not come; she ascertained that. The weeks went on, and he had never once climbed those vine-wreathed stairs to see Hatty.

Esther fretted and questioned. One day, in the midst of her nervous conjectures, she struck the chord in Hatty which vibrated with information.

"I hope you want too forrard with Henry, Hatty," said the old woman. "You didn't act too anxious arter him, did you? That's apt to turn fellows."

Then Hatty spoke. Some pink spots flared out on her quiet, pale cheeks.

"Grandma," said she, "I'll tell you, if you want to know, what the trouble is. I wasn't goin' to, because I didn't want to make you feel bad; but, if you're goin' to throw out such things as that to me, I don't care. Henry's mother don't like you, there!"

"What?"

"Henry's mother don't like you."

"Don't like me?"

"No."

"Why, what hev I done? I don't see what you mean, Hatty Gay."

"Grace Porter told me. Mrs. Little told her mother. Then I asked him, an' he owned up it was so."

"I'd like to know what she said."

Hatty went on, pitilessly, "She told Grace's mother she didn't want her son to marry into the Gay tribe anyhow. She didn't think much of 'em. She said any girl whose folks didn't keep Sunday, an' stayed away from meetin' an' worked, wouldn't amount to much."

"I don't believe she said it."

"She did. Henry said his mother took on so he was afraid she'd die, if he didn't give it up."

Esther sat up straight. She seemed to bristle out suddenly with points, from her knitting needles to her sharp elbows and thin chin and nose. "Well, he kin give it up then, if he wants to, for all me. I ain't goin' to give up my principles fir him, nor any of his folks, an' they'll find it out. You kin git somebody else jest as good as he is."

"I don't want anybody else."

"H'm, you needn't have 'em then, ef you ain't got no more sperit. I shouldn't think you'd want your grandmother to give up doin' what's right yourself, Hatty Gay."

"I ain't sure it is right."

"Ain't sure it's right. Then I s'pose you think it would be better for an old woman that's stone deaf, an' can't hear a word of the preachin', to go to meetin' an' set there, doin' nothin' two hours, instead of stayin' to home an' knittin', to airn a leetle money to give to the Lord. All I've got to say is, you kin think so, then. I'm a-goin' to do what's right, no matter what happens."

Hatty said nothing more. She took up her sewing again; her grandmother kept glancing at her. Finally she said, in a mollifying voice, "Why don't you go an' git you a leetle piece of that cake in the cupboard; you didn't eat no supper hardly."

"I don't want any."

"Well, if you want to make yourself sick, an' go without eatin, you kin."

Hatty did go without eating much through the following weeks. She laid awake nights, too, staring pitifully into the darkness, but she did not make herself ill. There was an unflinching strength in that little, meager body, which lay even back of her own will. It would take long for her lack of spirit to break her down entirely; but her grandmother did not know that. She watched her and worried. Still she had not the least idea of giving in. She knitted more zealously than ever Sundays; indeed, there was, to her possibly distorted perceptions, a religious zeal in it.

She knitted on weekdays too. She reeled off a good many pairs of those reliable blue-yarn stockings, and sold them to a dealer in the city. She gave away every cent which she earned, and carefully concealed the direction of her giving. Even Hatty did not know of it.

Six weeks after Hatty's lover left, the old woman across the way died. After the funeral, when measures were taken for the settlement of the estate, it was discovered that all the little property was gone, eaten up by a mortgage and the interest. The two old women had lived upon

the small house and the few acres of land for the last ten years, ever since Lavinia's father had died. He had grubbed away in a boot shop, and earned enough for their frugal support as long as he lived. Lavinia had never been able to work for her own living; she was not now. "Laviny Dodge will have to go to the poorhouse," everybody said.

One noon Hatty spoke of it to her grandmother. She rarely spoke of anything now, but this was uncommon news.

"They say Laviny Dodge has got to go to the poorhouse," said she. "What?"

"They say Laviny Dodge has got to go to the poorhouse."

"I don't believe a word on't."

"They say it's so."

That afternoon Esther went over to ascertain the truth of the report for herself. She found Lavinia sitting alone in the kitchen crying. Esther went right in, and stood looking at her.

"It's so, ain't it?" said she.

Lavinia started. There was a momentary glimpse of a red, distorted face; then she hid it again, and went on rocking herself to and fro and sobbing. She had seated herself in the rocking chair to weep. "Yes," she wailed, "it's so! I've got to go. Mr. Barnes come in, an' said I had this mornin'; there ain't no other way. I've—got—to go. Oh, what would mother have said!"

Esther stood still, looking. "A place gits run out afore you know it," she remarked.

"Oh, I didn't s'pose it was quite so near gone. I thought mebbe I could stay—as long as I lived."

"You'd oughter hev kept account."

"I s'pose I hed, but I never knew much 'bout money matters, an' poor mother, she was too old. Father was real sharp, ef he'd lived. Oh, I've got to go! I never thought it would come to this!"

"I don't think you're fit to do any work."

"No; they say I ain't. My rheumatism has been worse lately. It's been hard work for me to crawl round an' wait on mother. I've got to go. Oh, Esther, it's awful to think I can't die in my own home. Now I've got—to die in the poorhouse! I've—got—to die in the poorhouse!"

"I've got to go now," said Esther.

"Don't go. You ain't but jest come. I ain't got a soul to speak to."

"I'll come in agin arter supper," said Esther, and went out resolutely, with Lavinia wailing after her to come back. At home, she sat down and deliberated. She had a long talk with Hatty when she returned. "I don't care," was all she could get out of the girl, who was more silent than usual. She ate very little supper.

It was eight o'clock when Esther went over to the Dodge house. The windows were all dark. "Land, I believe she's gone to bed," said the old woman, fumbling along through the yard. The door was fast, so she knocked. "Laviny, Laviny, be you gone to bed? Laviny Dodge!"

"Who is it?" said a quavering voice on the other side, presently.

"It's me. You gone to bed?"

"It's you, Mis' Gay, ain't it?"

"Yes. Let me in. I want to see you a minute."

Then Lavinia opened the door and stood there, her old knees knocking together with cold and nervousness. She had got out of bed and put a plaid shawl over her shoulders when she heard Esther.

"I want to come in jest a minute," said Esther. "I hadn't any idee you'd be gone to bed."

The fire had gone out, and it was chilly in the kitchen, where the two women sat down.

"You'll ketch your death of cold in your nightgown," said Esther. "You'd better git somethin' more to put over you."

"I don't keer if I do ketch cold," said Lavinia, with an air of feeble recklessness, which sat oddly upon her.

"Laviny Dodge, don't talk so."

"I don't keer. I'd ruther ketch my death of cold than not; then I shouldn't have to die in the poorhouse." The old head, in its little cotton nightcap, cocked itself sideways, with pitiful bravado.

Esther rose, went into the bedroom, got a quilt and put it over Lavinia's knees. "There," said she, "you hev that over you. There ain't no sense in your talkin' that way. You're jest a-flyin' in the face of Providence, an' Providence don't mind the little flappin' you kin make, any more than a barn does a swaller."

"I can't help it."

"What?"

"I—can't help it."

"Yes, you kin help it, too. Now, I'll tell you what I've come over here for. I've been thinkin' on't all the arternoon, an' I've made up my mind. I want you to come over and live with me."

Lavinia sat feebly staring at her. "Live with you!"

"Yes. I've got my house an' my pension, an' I pick up some with my knittin'. Two won't cost much more'n one. I reckon we kin git along well enough."

Lavinia said nothing, she still sat staring. She looked scared.

Esther began to feel hurt. "Mebbe you don't want to come," she said, stiffly, at last.

Lavinia shivered. "There's jest—one thing—" she commenced.

"What?"

"There's jest one thing—"

"What's that?"

"I dunno what— Mother— You're real good; but— Oh, I don't see how I kin come, Esther!"

"Why not? If there's any reason why you don't want to live with me, I want to know what 'tis."

Lavinia was crying. "I can't tell you," she sobbed; "but, mother— If—you didn't work Sundays. Oh!"

"Then you mean to say you'd ruther go to the poorhouse than come to live with me, Lavinia Dodge?"

"I—can't help it."

"Then, all I've got to say is, you kin go."

Esther went home, and said no more. In a few days she, peering around her curtain, saw poor Lavinia Dodge, a little, trembling, shivering figure, hoisted into the poorhouse covered wagon, and driven off. After the wagon was out of sight, she sat down and cried.

It was early in the afternoon. Hatty had just gone to her work, having scarcely tasted her dinner. Her grandmother had worked hard to get an extra one today, too, but she had no heart to eat. Her mournful silence, which seemed almost obstinate, made the old woman at once angry and wretched. Now she wept over Lavinia Dodge and Hatty, and the two causes combined made bitter tears.

"I wish to the land" she cried out loud once—"I wish to the land I could find some excuse; but I ain't goin' to give up what I think's right."

Esther Gay had never been so miserable in her life as she was for the three months after Lavinia Dodge left her home. She thought of her, she watched Hatty, and she knitted. Hatty was at last beginning to show the effects of her long worry. She looked badly, and the neighbors began speaking about it to her grandmother. The old woman seemed to resent it when they did. At times she scolded the girl, at times she tried to pet her, and she knitted constantly, weekdays and Sundays.

Lavinia had been in the almshouse three months, when one of the neighbors came in one day and told Esther that she was confined to her bed. Her rheumatism was worse, and she was helpless. Esther dropped her knitting, and stared radiantly at the neighbor. "You said she was an awful sight of trouble, didn't you?" said she.

"Yes; Mis' Marvin said it was worse than takin' care of a baby."

"I should think it would take about all of anybody's time."

"I should. Why, Esther Gay, you look real tickled 'cause she's sick!" cried the woman, bluntly.

Esther colored. "You talk pretty," said she.

"Well, I don't care; you looked so. I don't s'pose you was," said the other, apologetically.

That afternoon Esther Gay made two visits: one at the selectmen's room, in the town hall, the other at Henry Little's. One of her errands at the selectmen's room was concerning the reduction of her taxes.

"I'm a-payin' too much on that leetle house," said she, standing up, alert and defiant. "It ain't wuth it." There was some dickering, but she gained her point. Poor Esther Gay would never make again her foolish little boast about her large tax. More than all her patient, toilsome knitting was the sacrifice of this bit of harmless vanity.

When she arrived at the Littles', Henry was out in the yard. He was very young; his innocent, awkward face flushed when he saw Esther coming up the path.

"Good arternoon," said she. Henry jerked his head.

"Your mother to home?"

"Ye—s."

Esther advanced and knocked, while Henry stood staring.

Presently Mrs. Little answered the knock. She was a large woman. The astonished young man saw his mother turn red in the face, and rear herself in order of battle, as it were, when she saw who her caller was; then he heard Esther speak.

"I'm a-comin' right to the p'int afore I come in," said she. "I've heard you said you didn't want your son to marry my granddaughter because you didn't like some things about me. Now, I want to know if you said it."

"Yes; I did," replied Mrs. Little, tremulous with agitation, red, and perspiring, but not weakening.

"Then you didn't have nothin' again' Hatty, you nor Henry? 'Twa'n't an excuse?"

"I ain't never had anything against the girl."

"Then I want to come in a minute. I've got somethin' I want to say to you, Mrs. Little."

"Well, you can come in—if you want to."

After Esther had entered, Henry stood looking wistfully at the windows. It seemed to him that he could not wait to know the reason of Esther's visit. He took things more soberly than Hatty; he had not lost his meals nor his sleep; still he had suffered. He was very fond of the girl, and he had a heart which was not easily diverted. It was hardly possible that he would ever die of grief, but it was quite possible that he might live long with a memory, young as he was.

When his mother escorted Esther to the door, as she took leave, there was a marked difference in her manner. "Come again soon, Mis' Gay," he heard her say, "run up any time you feel like it, an' stay to tea. I'd really like to have you."

"Thank ye," said Esther, as she went down the steps. She had an aspect of sweetness about her which did not seem to mix well with herself.

When she reached home she found Hatty lying on the lounge. "How do you feel tonight?" said she, unpinning her shawl.

"Pretty well."

"You'd better go an' brush your hair an' change your dress. I've been over to Henry's an' seen his mother, an' I shouldn't wonder if he was over here tonight."

Hatty sat bolt upright and looked at her grandmother. "What do you mean?"

"What I say. I've been over to Mrs. Little's, an' we've had a talk. I guess she thought she'd been kind of silly to make such a fuss. I reasoned with her, an' I guess she saw I'd been more right about some things than she'd thought for. An' as far as goin' to meetin' an' knittin' Sundays is concerned— Well, I don't s'pose I kin knit any more if I want to. I've been to see about it, an' Lavinia Dodge is comin' here Saturday, an' she's so bad with her rheumatiz that she can't move, an' I guess it'll be all I kin do to wait on her, without doin' much knittin'. Mebbe I kin git a few minutes evenin's, but I reckon 'twon't amount to much. Of course I couldn't go to meetin' if I wanted to. I couldn't leave Lavinia."

"Did she say he—was coming?"

"Yes; she said she shouldn't wonder if he was up."

The young man did come that evening, and Esther retired to her little bedroom early, and lay listening happily to the soft murmur of voices outside. Lavinia Dodge arrived Saturday. The next morning, when Hatty had gone to church, she called Esther. "I want to speak to you a minute," said she. "I want to know if— Mr. Winter brought me over, and he married the Ball girl that's been in the post office, you know, and somethin' he said— Esther Gay, I want to know if you're the one that's been sendin' that money to me and mother all along?"

Esther colored, and turned to go. "I don't see why you think it's me."

"Esther, don't you go. I know 'twas; you can't say 'twa'n't."

"It wa'n't much, anyhow,"

"'Twas to us. It kept us goin' a good while longer. We never said anythin' about it. Mother was awful proud, you know, but I dunno what we should have done. Esther, how could you do it?"

"Oh, it wa'n't anythin'. It was extra money. I airn'd it."

"Knittin'?"

Esther jerked her head defiantly. The sick woman began to cry. "If I'd ha' known, I would ha' come. I wouldn't have said a word."

"Yes, you would, too. You was bound to stan' up for what you thought was right, jest as much as I was. Now, we've both stood up, an' it's all right. Don't you fret no more about it."

"To think—"

"Land sakes, don't cry. The tea's all steeped, and I'm goin' to bring you in a cup now."

Henry came that evening. About nine o'clock Esther got a pitcher and went down to the well to draw some water for the invalid. Her old joints were so tired and stiff that she could scarcely move. She had had a hard day. After she had filled her pitcher she stood resting for a moment, staring up at the bright sitting-room windows. Henry and Hatty were in there: just a simple, awkward young pair, with nothing beautiful about them, save the spark of eternal nature, which had its own light. But they sat up stiffly and timidly in their two chairs, looking at each other with full content. They had glanced solemnly and bashfully at Esther when she passed through the room; she appeared not to see them.

Standing at the well, looking up at the windows, she chuckled softly to herself. "It's all settled right," said she, "an' there don't none of 'em suspect that I'm a-carryin' out my p'int arter all."

The Authors

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT (1832–1888) remains a household name to the present day, thanks to her 1868 classic *Little Women*. Her first book appeared in 1855, a collection of fairy tales dedicated to the family friend, Ralph Waldo Emerson. She was a “closet writer” of shock-literature published anonymously or under pseudonyms, salvaged from obscurity in *Behind the Mask* (1975). In her serious works she advocated free education to children of all races and classes. Most of her great work was veiled autobiography, “How I Went Out to Service” being no exception. Louisa wrote incessantly to support her family and money worries were very real to her.

GERTRUDE FRANKLIN ATHERTON (1857–1948) was born in San Francisco and educated by her grandfather and private tutors in her native city and in Lexington, Kentucky. She was a descendent, on her mother's side, of Benjamin Franklin. She became a world traveller and advocate of women's rights, reporting to American magazines, during the first World War, on conditions of women and children, including women combatants. She came to be one of the best selling authors in America, and remained active until the last year of her life.

SUE PETTIGRU KING BOWEN (1824–1875) was South Carolina's great antebellum regionalist, a leading light of the oft-called “feminine fifties,” an era when women dominated American literature and the magazine trade. In the post-Civil War politics of the Carolinas, Sue's Republicanism was considered a betrayal of her aristocratic origins, and led to her ostracization and the collapse of her writing career.

ALICE BROWN (1857–1948) was a Boston bluestocking native of New Hampshire, establishing a lasting reputation as a local colorist with two milestone collections, *Meadow Grass* (1895) and *Tiverton Tales* (1899). She has often been cited as the third arm of a New England regionalist triad that includes Mary Freeman and Sarah Jewett. After the turn of the century, when the national taste for local color fiction wound down, Alice was the only regionalist to retain her audience, for she turned her hand successfully to the popular novel, and continued publishing until her death.

LYDIA MARIA FRANCIS CHILD (1802–1880) was Massachusetts born and buried, a pillar of New England regionalism, contemporary to Rose Terry Cooke and Harriet Beecher Stowe in developing the essentially feminist genre that came to be called “local color” fiction. She left home at age eighteen, convinced that the independent way of life was for her. Much of her creative energy took a reformist character, and she wrote often for social tolerance, Native American rights, women’s rights, and against slavery.

KATE O’FLAHERTY CHOPIN (1851–1904) was Irish, French, and Creole by descent, a member of the St. Louis aristocracy, raised in an environment of powerful matriarchs. When she married and moved to New Orleans, she became the foremost author of the region. She brought the heated exoticism of her adopted city to a national audience. Her 1899 novel *The Awakening* remains a feminist classic.

ROSE TERRY COOKE (1827–1892) first of the “local colorists,” was later overshadowed by Sarah Jewett and Mary Freeman. For nearly 40 years her works graced the leading magazines. The local colorists were mostly avowed feminists, though Rose’s Calvinism made her leery of the label, and she believed greatly in a fundamental family structure with a good husband making the decisions. Yet she knew how rare the ideal husband was, and much of her fiction is highly critical of women’s common lot.

REBECCA HARDING DAVIS (1831–1910) was a pioneer of American Realism, due to her 1861 classic *Life in the Iron Mills*. Her only short story collection appeared in 1892, but for reasons now incomprehensible, this book failed to collect her best work, which lies hidden in serial magazines.

MARY WILKINS FREEMAN (1852–1930) wrote grim tales of eccentric village wives, widows, spinsters, and children, devoid of sentiment, and sometimes downright frightening. She was called morbid by her detractors, but the majority found her high degree of realism stunning. Mary lived the majority of her creative life with Mary Wales.

CHARLOTTE ANNA PERKINS STETSON GILMAN (1860–1935) was a radical feminist theorist with a lifelong interest in women and economics. Her non-fiction was voluminous, but it was her short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” which assured a lasting reputation. It focused on her own actual experiences with a maddeningly self-certain physician whose well-intended treatment of Charlotte’s depressions was subtly brutal. That doctor was the famed author S. Weir Mitchell, who was later to repent his horrifying theories on how to treat women in crisis, due largely to the influence of Charlotte’s tale.

ELIZA CAROLINE CALVERT HALL (1856–?) was born in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and rose to prominence as a magazinist due in great part to her influential short story “Sally Ann’s Experience.” It dealt so dramatically with legal injustice to women that laws regarding property rights began to change all across America. She was additionally a noted collector of textiles and quilts, one of the earliest critics to note the great artistic value of women’s folk art fabrics.

SARAH ORNE JEWETT (1849–1909) published the milestone of “local color,” *Deephaven*, in 1877, recounting the adventures of two young women in a mythical Maine village. She perfected the form in *Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896), similarly a collection of interconnected vignettes, but this time the adventuring woman is alone. Jewett was to a great extent just such a loner, having never married. Many of her women are isolated literally or emotionally, yet have a positive will.

ELIZABETH GARVER JORDAN (1865–1947) was born in Milwaukee and died in her adopted New York City. In 1890, she arrived in New York to work on Joseph Pulitzer’s *World*, for which she provided reports from hospitals, slums, Chinatown, the morgue, jails, and asylums. She reported Lizzie Borden’s trial in 1893, the same year publishing a series of articles on tenement conditions. In 1900 she became editor of *Harper’s Bazaar*. As an editor she introduced such authors as Zona Gail, Dorothy Canfield,

THE AUTHORS

and Sinclair Lewis. She lived with another woman, with whom she adopted a French infant. As a leading feminist of her day, Elizabeth attracted many women journalists to her salons.

GERTRUDE ROSCOE (?–?) wrote short stories for leading magazines at the turn of the century. Despite her success in this medium, she seems to have quickly withdrawn from literary circles, and has left no easily uncovered traces of herself; thus we must satisfy ourselves by knowing her chiefly through her fiction.

ANNIE TRUMBULL SLOSSON (1838–1926) became nationally known for her dialect portraits of Connecticut village life. She was among the first authors designated a “local colorist.” Annie was also a collector of moths and took many trips to Florida and elsewhere in search of specimens. She discovered several new kinds, some of them carrying her name to this day.

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS WARD (1844–1911) was born Mary Gray Phelps. Her mother died when she was yet a child, and little Mary took her mother’s name for her own and kept it for life. She identified so strongly with her mother that she wrote her first novel while still a teenager, bundled in her mother’s coat in a study in the barn. Apart from her popular supernatural novels, she was usually a hard-hitting realist, sometimes quite grim in her portraits of women workers, poverty, and social injustice.

EDITH NEWBOLD JONES WHARTON (1862–1937) was born into a wealthy and conservative New York City family, and was a Rhinelander on her mother’s side. She lived much of her childhood in Europe and spoke fluent French, German, and Italian. In December 1889, her sonnet “Happiness” appeared in *Scribner’s Magazine*. Her first short story appeared two years later, and in 1899 her first collection appeared. Highly influenced by Henry James, she was fond of writing ghost stories; and, as James preferred London to America, Wharton preferred Paris, although neither author escaped the essentially American nature of their art. Edith’s bravery in the Great War, aiding thousands of refugees, won her the Medal of the French Legion of Honor in 1916. She was also the first woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize.

CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON (1840–1894) was one of the pioneers of local color fiction. Her short stories were generally set in the northern Lake country, in the deep South, or in Italy. She moved to Europe in 1879 and never returned. She died from a fall from her bedroom window in Venice, Italy. Some believed it suicide after a long depression, others crediting it to an accident while disoriented from influenza.

The Editors

JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON is an award-winning editor, novelist, poet, and short story writer. Her most recent book is nonfiction, *The Encyclopedia of Amazons*. She is presently working on a “Philistine’s guide” to women of the Bible.

CHARLES WAUGH has collaborated in compiling more than 200 anthologies of short stories. He lives in Maine with his family and as full professor teaches speech and psychology at the University of Maine at Augusta.

ISABELLE DAVIS WAUGH is a graduate of Temple University and was a teacher of college preparatory English for 35 years. She is now retired and spends her time in Davidson, North Carolina, enjoying writing essays and poetry and is involved in the North Carolina Federated Women’s Club.

THE AUTHORS

DEBORAH PICKMAN CLIFFORD is an historian and a biographer. *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Biography of Julia Ward Howe* was published in 1979. Her forthcoming book on the life of the nineteenth century author and reformer, Lydia Maria Child, will be published in 1992 by the Beacon Press. Ms. Clifford also writes about early Vermont women. She lives and works in Cornwall, Vermont.



Introduction by Deborah Pickman Clifford, author of *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Biography of Julia Ward Howe* and a forthcoming biography of Lydia Maria Child.

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